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A

SHORT ACCOUNT

OF THE

NAVAL ACTIONS

OF THE

LAST WAR;

IN ORDER TO PROVE

THAT THE FRENCH NATION NEVER GAVE SUCH SLENDER
PROOFS OF MARITIME GREATNESS AS
DURING THAT PERIOD;

WITH

OBSERVATIONS ON THE DISCIPLINE,

AND

HINTS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT,

OF THE

BRITISH NAVY.

THE SECOND EDITION.

BY AN OFFICER.

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P R E F A C E.

IN order to dispel a notion extremely prejudicial to the honour of this country, that the French have not only equalled, but surpassed us as a maritime nation, whether in manœuvring, sailing, or fighting a fleet, I have taken up the pen. The idea has no doubt been zealously propagated by our industrious natural enemies, who well know, that if such an opinion were once generally embraced, it would produce the very effects they wish to flow from it. Permit the French to have the REPUTATION of superior genius, courage, and abilities, and you immediately damp the spirits of our officers and seamen; who, in that case, would not plough the ocean,

as they have done, in quest of the enemy, with elated courage, and *in confidence of victory*; would not boldly attack, but timidly *defend*; and be satisfied, if, instead of striking the flags of their adversaries, they themselves escaped being captured.

Despondence is pernicious to the aggrandisement of any nation; and should be held in particular detestation in this island, where a humid atmosphere depresses the animal spirits, and naturally encourages it. Upon the least failure of success, men, otherwise of good sense and courage, indulge too much in gloomy apprehensions for the fate of their country. They thus aid the evil they should remedy; and do not consider, that temporary, or occasional disasters, are common to all nations; and that, to counteract or overcome them, confidence in their resources, and firmness and ardour in combat, are absolutely requisite. Under every misfortune, the Romans

mans remained firm and undaunted; and to this fortitude, as much as to their valour, were they indebted for their conquests.

That the notion, or opinion, which I have mentioned, in favour of the French, and degrading to England, foolishly prevailed during last war, no person in the recollection of the period will be hardy enough to deny. I have made it my business to shew, from facts, how unfounded it was; and to prove, that at no æra whatever did they exhibit so little prowess to boast of.

If I am able to establish this point, the consequences may prove beneficial to my country. For, instead of harbouring, in future, unmanly notions of ourselves, it will serve to illustrate, that unanimity, and good conduct, are all that are necessary to render Great Britain flourishing, and triumphant, over the world.

Respecting

Respecting the composition of the following pages, I confess it to be very faulty; and, without reserve, I abandon it to the critics. If, however, when they condemn my violation of the rules of grammar, they give me credit for the motives that prompted the publication, *viz.* a desire to do honour to my country, and to remove a popular error, unpropitious to her glory, I shall remain satisfied.

THE AUTHOR:

A SHORT

A
SHORT ACCOUNT
OF THE
NAVAL ACTIONS
OF THE
LAST WAR, &c.

THERE seems to be an opinion (and that but too general) prevailing, that our fleets are not what they were formerly; and that the naval power of France has equalled, if not surpassed, that of Great Britain.

Without inquiring whence this error originates—for an egregious error it certainly is—from what quarter propagated, the sort of people it is favoured by;

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or

or whether it proceeds from ignorance, or mischief; let us examine how well the gentlemen who favour this opinion are founded in their assertions.

It is acknowledged, I believe, that the best way to arrive at truth is by investigating facts, from authentic evidence.—I shall therefore, in the first place, set out with asserting, in direct opposition to what these gentlemen advance, ‘ That at no time since Great Britain was ‘ a maritime power, has she had such ‘ solid reasons to be satisfied with her ‘ naval prowess and superiority, as from ‘ the events of last war.’—I am far from being averse to the going into the proof of what I advance, or ashamed of comparing the actions of last war with those of the war which preceded it, or any the most glorious war that is upon record, and whose brilliant naval actions grace the annals of this nation.

Let

Let us then, first, recollect how the last war commenced with the French, and what, in all probability, was the grand object of that nation. Is it imagined that it was the dismemberment of America from this empire? Can the wisest, the ablest politician in the world, pretend to have foreseen, that America would atchieve (assisted as she was) her independance *? It was never imagined, their most sanguine enthusiasts in the cause never expected, that in so short a time it could have happened. But there arose out of this cruel and unnatural war, an object which our natural enemy could not be otherwise than tempted to look at. The prospect was more alluring, more flattering to their am-

* I believe four men in five are of opinion, that, had the British army in America (the finest troops, for their numbers, that ever were brought into the field) been commanded by a Duke of Brunswick, the *burthen*, with the glory of American dependance, would have been secured to Great Britain,

bitious views, than any that had been presented to them since the two nations had been rivals. I will therefore ask, if there can be any doubt, but that the destruction of our navy was their grand aim? Considering that their chief attention had been directed to their own navy during the peace; that there was a prospect (though it proved delusive) that we should not be able to man all our ships, from being deprived of seamen which formerly we had drawn from the American trade; that, instead of the aid of these seamen, they would fight against us; considering the complexion of the times, that the nation was in a state of factious ferment at home, and that the fever of party had ever tainted the discipline of our fleets; that the French had got to sea before us, with a superior fleet, sanguine in their projects, presumptuous in confidence, with a prince of the blood, to gather promised laurels, and

and to share expected triumphs:—upon the whole, can it be doubted for a moment, what was their grand, and always favourite object? or can we wonder, that they were sanguine in their expectations of pulling down the bulwark of this island?

It is indeed almost needless to inquire, how far they have succeeded. It ought to be as animating to Englishmen, as it is humiliating and disgraceful to our rival, to be convinced, that the war terminated without the enemy having in their possession one single line of battle ship taken from the British fleet; whilst every harbour in England is adorned with the floating castles of our enemy. Twenty sail of the line were captured in the course of the war, with a greater number of large frigates than was ever taken in any former war. And though we were unfortunate in losing some ships by storms and hurricanes, particularly

cularly the Ville de Paris, which had been borne into the harbour of Jamaica in glorious triumph, and afterwards graced an English line of battle; yet these unfortunate events do not diminish the lustre of our conquests. But let us as concisely as possible examine this naval war.

The first blood drawn, was in a severe action between the *Arethusa*, commanded by Captain Samuel Marthal, and the French frigate *La Belle Poule*. The greatest gallantry was evinced on both sides. The English frigate was inferior in size, number of men, and weight of metal; yet, if we were to judge from the difference in the list of killed and wounded, being more than five to one in favour of the English frigate, superior prowess was evident.

Soon after this action, we shall find upon record the ever memorable 27th of July, 1778, disgraceful to both nations—but certainly

tainly most so to the French ; and infinitely more discouraging, and at this period mortifying and humiliating, if they will allow us to believe, that they expected nothing less than that the first essay of their grand fleet would be crowned with decided victory. However artfully they have concealed their feelings ; however they might endeavour to impose upon the eyes of Europe a fallacious account of the battle, they could not deceive their own officers and seamen who returned to that harbour of Brest, from which they had sailed a few days before with a confident spirit, cherished to that ardor and madness for battle, which Frenchmen are acknowledged to possess, equal to any nation, when fighting in the presence of their princes :—they returned, I say, with that depression, which ardent and presumptive spirits feel when mortified by disappointment. I am sure there is not a man who served on that

day in the British fleet, who is not convinced, that if the French Admiral had not taken the advantage of the night to retreat, the British fleet would have renewed the battle the following morning. Without going further into the subject, which we have been already surfeited with, however every man in that fleet; in his own mind, is convinced that the enemy should have been followed to the harbour's mouth of Brest; still I will venture to affirm, that a British seaman had never a more contemptible opinion of his enemy, than from the conduct of the French Admiral on the 27th and 28th of July: and such an opinion, at the beginning of a war, was surely no immaterial circumstance; for, notwithstanding, the action was not decisive, there were exhibited those bold and daring proofs of valour, which have so often confounded our enemies. Single ships were seen rushing into action against a wall
of

of fire, unsupported; they saw the signal for battle flying, and never looked behind them; one ship cut through their line*, which evinced that the force and prowess of each ship, was such as required only vigour and presence of mind to have combined the whole, and to have conducted the fleet to certain victory.

Let us at once pass on to the next circumstance of great moment; which happened in the home seas; when we shall see (what indeed for many years England had not been accustomed to behold) the united fleets of France and Spain in the British Channel, commanded by the Comte d'Orvilliers and Don Cordova, of 62 sail of the line, and our own fleet of 36 sail, commanded by Sir Charles Hardy, retiring before it; either to draw the unwieldy fleet of the enemy into the narrow

* The *Courageux*, commanded by Lord Mulgrave.

part of the Channel, where it would have been exposed to great danger, had they met with bad weather; or, what is more probable, the British Admiral did not think it prudent to hazard a battle against such odds, when there was so much at stake. The nation, spoilt I may say by the success of the former war, without considering the causes, went at once into a flame of discontent; they were ready to believe that, had it happened in the year *fifty-nine*, we should have attacked and destroyed any fleet, whatever might have been its numbers.—But I will ask, whether any action of that war, or any war we have ever had with the French, can justify such presumption? There seems to have been indeed a confidence of this kind in the reign of King William; for, when Tourville* with a superior fleet came into

* Battle of Beachy Head. The French fleet was 60 line of battle ships; the English combined with the Dutch was 41.

the Channel, Lord Torrington had positive orders to give the enemy battle. Great Britain was in alliance at that time with the Dutch; of whose ships part of our fleet was composed, and who fought with an obstinacy at that time peculiar to their character. The event of the battle was unsuccessful; superior numbers prevailed; several of the Dutch ships were sunk, with two English of the line: a total overthrow was only prevented by the English Admiral judiciously anchoring his fleet on the tide of ebb; which separated the two fleets, and secured him a safe retreat into our harbours upon the next flood tide.

This event encouraged Tourville, the following year, to attack * with 44 of his victorious ships the largest fleet that was

* The battle of La Hogue.

ever commanded by an English Admiral, and, considering the size of the ships, the most formidable force that had ever been assembled by any nation. It consisted of 63 British ships of the line, (six of which were of 100 guns, bearing together 4600 men, and ten of 90 guns), with the Dutch squadron of 36 sail (19 of which were first and second rates); making in the whole a line of battle of 99 sail. With such mighty odds, can it be wondered at that the fleet of France was worsted in the first day's battle; or that it was pursued, and a great part of it destroyed in a defenceless bay * on the second? Our wonder is more justly excited, that the French Admiral should have had the temerity to have attacked it at

* Perhaps, if the French had had an harbour at that time at Cherbourg, they would not have lost a single ship. This is, perhaps, as strong a circumstance as can be produced, of what importance to that nation it will be to complete that harbour.

all; and that, having once involved himself in battle, he should have escaped even to have run any one of his ships on shore. But let it be observed, on the subject of this battle, though the consequences were most fortunate to England, in diminishing the naval power of France, yet, as to the victory, I am inclined to believe, we have been, as a warlike nation, rather too vain, for we were more than two ships to one. And when we boast of the glorious *ninety-two*, we are ignorant of the circumstances attending the action.

But to return to my subject, and connect with it my observations on these two battles: I take with me, I think, some degree of proof, that it is not skill or courage that can insure success against a fleet, greatly superior. It should be remembered that, in the victories obtained in the year 1747, Admiral Anson's fleet was 14 sail of the line; the enemy's only 5: in the
same

same year, Admiral Hawke's fleet was 14 to 8 of the enemy: that, in our successes in the year 1759, Admiral Boscawen's victory was obtained over the French Admiral De la Clue, when his fleet was 14 sail of the line, the enemy's only 7. Yet it is from a recollection of these successes, when our ships were two to one against the enemy, in former wars, that it was expected, in the last war, that the enemy was to be attacked, and beaten, when nearly two to one against us *. The victory obtained by

Sir

* Of the circumstances that might be brought in proof, that the ships of France fought either with greater obstinacy, or that our ships were not so formidable, in former wars, there is one that evidently shews it; which is, by comparing what the nation expected of the navy at the different periods. We find, in the reign of King William, that Admiral Herbert had a battle with the French fleet in Bantry Bay. The fleets were nearly equal; that is, we had 22 sail of the line, and the enemy's line of battle was 24. There was not any ship taken on either side; but our

historians

Sir Edward Hawke over Conflans, was not in consequence of a battle. The French Admiral never attempted to try the strength of his fleet, but fled before a shot was fired; having orders, as it is said, to avoid a battle, and pursue the object for which *his* armament had been equipped, the making a descent in Ireland. Yet no Admiral's character has ever stood so high for intrepidity as Sir Edward Hawke's; whose firm heart, braving the dangers which threatened him, resolved on the destruction of his country's foes, his spirit impelled him in the pursuit, amidst rocks and shoals, on their own coast, on a lee-shore, in the month of November.

In the same fortunate war, we see the Admirals Pocock and Stevens, in the East

historians are rather inclined to admit, that we had the worst of it. Yet Admiral Herbert was created a Viscount, several of the Captains were knighted, and the seamen rewarded with a bounty of ten shillings each.

Indies,

Indies, with great bravery engage the French fleet commanded by *Monf. d'Aché* in three several battles—no ships taken on either side: and this was the only quarter of the globe where the enemy had ships to contend with us. The renown we had acquired from our successes at home, and in other quarters of the globe, had no doubt animated our fleets, and damped the ardor of the enemy. But in India, after long and bloody contests, we were obliged to be contented with drawn battles;—the French line of battle having a superiority of two ships*. And these circumstances continue the proof, that the intoxicating successes of that popular war, do not justify us in the sobriety of reflection

* In the first and second action with *Monsieur d'Aché*, it appears we had a line of battle ship more than the enemy, and that they brought two ships of 44 guns and a frigate into the line:

tion to believe, that we may always risque a battle when the enemy is so greatly superior in numbers as the combined fleets were, commanded by Comte d'Orvilliers

English Line of Battle.

French Line of Battle.

	Guns	Captains		Guns	Captains
Tyger	60	Thomas Latham	Bien Aime	58	Monf. de la Palliers
Salisbury	50	John Somerset	Vengeur	50	Monf. Bouvet
Elizabeth	64	Commodore Stevens	Conde	44	Monf. de Rostaun
Yarmouth	66	Captain Kempelfelt	Duc d'Orleans	50	Monf. de Surville
Cumberland	50	Admiral Pocock	Zodiaque	74	Com. d'Ache
Newcastle	50	John Harrison	Saint Louis	50	Chev. de Montteill
Weymouth	60	William Brereton	Moras	44	Monf. Joannis
		Grey Legge	Sylphide	50	Monf. Bec de Lieyre
		Nicholas Vincent	Duc de Bourgogne	50	Monf. Mahe
					Monf. Apert

Ships in the last action of Admiral Pocock's with Monsieur d'Ache, which appears, from the number of men killed and wounded, to have been very obstinate.

English Line.

French Line.

	Guns	Captains.	Killed and Woun.		Guns
Elizabeth	64	Richard Tiddemans	77	Actif	64
Newcastle	50	Captain Michie	112	Minotaur	74
Tyger	60	William Brereton	168	Duc d'Orleans	60
Grafton	68	Rear Admiral Stevens	83	Saint Louis	50
Yarmouth	66	Richard Kempelfelt	39	Vengeur	64
Cumberland	50	Vice Admiral Pocock	51	Zodiaque	74
Salisbury	50	John Harrison	36	Comte de Provence	74
Sunderland	50	John Somerset	2	Duc de Bourgogne	50
Weymouth	60	Digby Dent	0	Illustre	64
		James Colville		Fortunee	60
		Sir William Baird		Centaur	64

Commodore's names not known.

and Don Cordova, which had ventured, we may say, into the narrow seas; for their conduct evinces that it was nothing more than a venture. We can scarcely call it insulting our coast; for, except giving the panic to some old West Country women of *both sexes*, they were perfectly harmless. I should believe, that there can be no greater proof of the imbecility of the French councils, or the timidity of their Admirals, than the inoffensive use they made of this wonderful armament—which simply failed up the Channel, and then failed back again. It did not appear by this manœuvre, that we were at all discouraged in our future projects; for the intrepid spirit of our seamen, under the command of the fortunate Sir George Rodney, soon blazed forth and was crowned with success, by the capture of several Spanish line of battle ships; and the list of the prisoners taken was graced by the name of their Admiral

Don Langara. Our fleet was superior; but the wind blowing strong upon the shore, and the weather hazy, made the pursuit and attack exceedingly hazardous. But such was the ardor of our commanders, that it appears the enemy's fleet was beaten, and taken, before they had considered the risque they had run; for the following day many of them were in danger of being driven in the enemy's port of Cadiz. The defence that the Spaniards made rather evinced obstinacy than skill, so that our ships received very little damage.

About this time an action between two single ships materially claims our notice; the Quebec frigate of 32 guns, nine and six pounders, commanded by Captain Farmer, and the Surveillant of 36 guns, fourteen and six pounders, commanded by Monsieur Coudie. The action was gallantly maintained on both sides, until

the masts of the French frigate came by the board, and she was silenced, and on the point of surrendering; at this critical moment the fore-mast of the Quebec fell ast upon the quarter-deck; and the guns firing at the same time, the sails caught fire in an instant. The flames spread so rapidly, that the ship was presently in a blaze, fore and aft; the main and mizen mast came also by the board. The enemy, encouraged by the accident, returned to their quarters, and increased the confusion. All attempts to extinguish the fire were vain: the ship burnt to the water's edge, and blew up with her gallant commander, colours flying, unconquered. Many of the officers and seamen swam to the enemy's ship, where they were received with that humanity which is so often to be found with heroic qualities; yet the utmost precaution was necessary in receiving them on board, such was the deplorable

deplorable state of the French frigate, in a sinking condition, and the decks filled with mangled and dead bodies.

Whilst the heart expands with admiration at this animating example, which, even in the midst of horror, kindles a spirit of emulation, let us not forget an action, which does the nation equal credit. Capt. Richard Pearson, commanding the *Serapis* of 44 guns, having with him an armed ship of 20 guns, commanded by Captain Piercy, by the most intrepid gallantry and perseverance, saved a valuable convoy of rich ships from the Baltic. The enemy were greatly superior, consisting of the *Bon Homme Richard* of 44 guns, and two large frigates of 36, with a brig of 16, commanded by Paul Jones, a desperate English outlaw. The battle raged furiously for a length of time; the *Serapis* lying along-side and on board the *Bon Homme Richard*, whilst one of the

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French

French frigates raked the Serapis fore and aft by repeated broadsides. This unequal contest was heroically maintained until the convoy were all in safety; and the main mast of the Serapis falling, she was obliged to surrender to the ship she had demolished; the desperado Jones being under the necessity of quitting his shattered sinking ship, and removing the remains of his crew to the Serapis. The merit of this action arises from the little probability there was of conquering. The apparent object with the British officers seems to have been that of risking their lives, until the trading wealth of this country was in safety; and it should not be forgotten, that the enemy lost a ship of equal force in the contest,

Let us now carry our investigation to the West Indies, and observe what happened there, to evince this so much talked of improved spirit of bravery in our enemy.

my. There we find Admiral Barrington, at the Cul de Sac at St. Lucia, December 23, 1778, with 7 sail of ships, most of them of 50 guns, resist the attack of 12 sail of heavy ships of the line commanded by Comte d'Estaing, and secure the conquest of that island; though there is not the smallest doubt, had the French Admiral employed only half the good conduct and determined bravery in his attack, that was evinced by the British Admiral in the defence of the little English squadron, the latter would have been destroyed, and the island of St. Lucia secured to France. Yet the French pride themselves upon the daring qualities of this officer. But nothing can so much prove the difference there is in the character of the two nations, as the satisfaction the French have shewn at the merely vapouring conduct of some of their Admirals. Let us examine if Mons. d'Estaing acquitted himself

better at the battle of the Grenades, the 8th of July 1779, when Admiral Byron, joined by Admiral Barrington, attacked the enemy's superior fleet. The British Admiral, it seems, had been deceived, either by ignorant or treacherous intelligence, which described the enemy's fleet to be much inferior; so that, instead of combining his whole force in a line of battle, he made the signal to chace, and engage as the ships came up with the enemy. Admiral *Barrington* in the *Prince of Wales*, Captains *Sawyer* in the *Boyne*, and *Gardner* in the *Sultan*, were the first up with the enemy; being followed by the *Lion*, Captain *Cornwallis*, the *Grafton*, Captain *Collingwood*, *Monmouth*, Captain *Fanshaw*, and the *Cornwall*, Captain *Edwards*. These officers, though they found the enemy greatly superior, did not hesitate to attack, and performed prodigies of valour—resisting the

the whole French fleet until the rest of our ships drew up. And then, notwithstanding those which had first engaged were greatly disabled, and the *Lion* separated by the enemy's line from our fleet; yet it would seem, that the boldness of the ships which had engaged effected such an impression, that the French Admiral was disposed to act entirely on the defensive; not even molesting the ships which were already cut off, and two others, the *Grafton* and *Cornwall*, which must have fallen with but moderate exertions.

Let us continue in these seas, and view the conduct of the enemy's Admiral, Comte de Guichen, who was met by an inferior fleet, commanded by Sir George Rodney, the 19th of May, 1780, to leeward of Martinique. Here the British fleet was separated, and thrown into confusion, by the signals of the Admiral not being clearly comprehended; yet the enemy were so roughly

roughly handled, that they fought a port; and in two actions afterwards convinced us, that they wished rather to avoid a battle than fight it out.—In this place I shall take occasion to speak of an old officer, whose character was threatened by a letter *, which appeared in the public papers, from Sir George Rodney to him. Captain Carkett had distinguished himself in the preceding war, and Sir George Rodney had appointed him in this battle to lead the British fleet. This veteran had the old Fighting Instructions imprinted on his mind. Sir George Rodney had made additions to these Instructions. He had signals which announced, that it was his intention to attack either the van, centre, or rear. He had made one of

* A letter from Sir George Rodney to Captain Carkett, purporting that, as he disapproved of his conduct on the day of battle, though he believed him to be a brave man, he had appointed another Captain to lead the British fleet under his command.

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these signals on this 19th of May; but after the signal had been made, the fleet had changed tacks, occasioned by the manœuvres of the enemy. The Fighting Instructions expressly say, that, when in a line of battle opposed to the enemy, the van ship is to steer with the ship of the enemy's van, and each ship is to engage his opponent in the enemy's line of battle. On this day Sir George Rodney, after several manœuvres, made the signal for his fleet to bear down and engage—every ship his opponent. The van of the enemy, it seems, at this time was far extended a-head of our van; and Captain Carkett thought it his duty to stretch a-head, and engage the van ship, agreeably to the old Fighting Instructions impressed on his mind. The ships in the van division, and part of the centre, followed him; which separated them from the centre. Each man thought he was doing his duty. And

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I must observe, that it required more gallantry in Captain Carkett's persevering to engage the van ship, receiving the fire of other ships as he passed, than to have bore down, and to have engaged the ship that happened to be, at the time the signal was made, opposed to him. Though it undoubtedly was the intention of Sir George Rodney, as the French line was extended, to have made an impression on the centre with his whole force.—I will not presume to say, that there was a want of precision in the Admiral's signals; but certain it is, that the language of signals, especially that which innovates upon established principles, should be not only perfectly clear in its meaning, but well marked by points of time. Be it as it will, if there was any advantage to be taken of these mistakes, it is evident that the enemy had not the courage, or skill, to attempt it.

Let

Let us continue in these seas; and remark upon what happened, when Sir Samuel Hood was sent with a reinforcement of five sail of the line to join Sir George Rodney. The surprise and capture of the island of St. Eustatius, as a military achievement, is not worth notice *, nor has it added one single

* The taking possession of St. Eustatius was certainly a great object, as it sometimes happened, that the French had no other means of being supplied, either with provisions or naval stores, than from the magazines of this island; and, to the eternal disgrace of Commerce, it was discovered that many English merchants were concerned in this traffic, sacrificing the interests of their country to their own selfish views. People who play so desperate a game deserve every misfortune that can befall them; and they of all others should have had the least claim to consideration, when the property and stores of the merchants were seized by the Commanders in Chief. The British sailors, who were protecting their country, and who in the line of battle ships received nothing but hard blows, (and but for whose bravery, on the 12th of April, no one can say that, with any degree of safety to Great Britain, the war would have been brought to an issue), were graciously promised

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single leaf to the laurels of the Commanders in Chief. There being only thirty invalids to defend it against a fleet of 14 sail of the line and 1500 troops, approaching with as much caution as if there had been to be surpris'd a strong garrison, time was lost by useless feints and preparations. Instead of the fleet proceeding immediately, it was brought to the leeward of Martinique—as it was said, to create an alarm there; whilst Sir Samuel Hood was dispatched with five sail of the line to wait for the fleet off the island of Nevis, and to prevent intelligence being sent to St. Eustatius. By this delay, the Dutch Ad-

the plunder of this island—of this nest of commercial traitors. Instead, however, of its being secured to them by the Courts of Law, the claimants met with such encouragement from the decrees in their favour, that many have prosecuted for property seized at St. Eustatius, who never had a six-pence upon the island; the Civilian and the claimant making a job of it, secure in a decree of restitution, to the ruin of the captors.

miral

miral sailed with the convoy from the road; though, *by good fortune*, the whole were afterwards captured.

Soon after the reduction of the island, Sir Samuel Hood was sent with his squadron of 17 sail of the line, to cruise to the leeward of Martinique; and, on the 28th of April, 1781, he descried the enemy's fleet, of 20 sail of the line, commanded by Comte de Grasse, steering round the Diamond Rock: these were soon joined by four men of war from Port Royal—making in the whole 24 sail of the line. The British Admiral, undaunted by their superior numbers and the weight of their ships, instantly drew his squadron into a close line, and offered the enemy battle; which, however, was cautiously accepted by the French Admiral, who, having the weather gage, had it always in his power to choose his distance. But he kept aloof, and fired
only

only at such a distance as evidently shewed he had no intention to fight the battle out, but that his design was to amuse and disable our ships. Sir Samuel made many judicious evolutions, to gain the wind and close with the enemy; and, after persevering for several days to no purpose, (and one of his ships being unable to keep the line), he was permitted to join Sir George Rodney, who was lying at this time at St. Eustatius, with the Sandwich, Triumph, and Panther.

When we observe, that it was in the power of the French Admiral, for three days, to bear down, to close with, and engage the British fleet, so much inferior in force, who can hesitate to determine, that such conduct does not give us room to believe, that our natural enemy has improved either in naval skill or courage? But, if we compare this action

action with the battles fought by Tourville (either his first, when our fleet, commanded by Lord Torrington, was defeated, or with the second off La Hogue, when he bore down with 44 ships of the line to attack 99, and fought a whole day without losing a ship), or with the wonders performed by the Counts Fourbin and Du Guay Trouin *, we may reasonably conclude, that, notwithstanding the number of their ships, the great maritime requisites have been upon the decline.

Let us now go back, and examine how well the enemy has sustained this pretended character of improvement in North

* In the Memoirs of the Counts Fourbin and Du Guay Trouin, their exploits are certainly overtold, with great mistakes. Yet the trade of England never suffered so much as from the activity and intrepidity of these Dunkirk heroes; and it is surely a disgraceful circumstance to the boasted glorious reign of Queen Anne, that not only our merchants were ruined, but several ships of the line of 80 and 70 guns were taken by these adventurers.

America. Here we meet again our inveterate and dishonourable * enemy, D'Estaing, who appeared off the Bar of New York with 12 sail of the line of two decks, whilst his adversary, Lord Howe, commanded within the Bar six sail of ships of 64 guns, three of 50, and two of 44. The French Admiral's conduct, for several days, threatened to pass the Bar, and attack the British squadron. The temptation was certainly great; the prize was worth contending for: for, if the enterprize had been crowned with success, not only the men of war, with all the transports and victuallers, must have fallen into his hands, but the most fatal blow would have been given to all our operations in that part of the globe. The Count's resolution, however, appears to have failed him, at the instant that

* Comte d'Estaing broke his parole of honour when a prisoner.

Fortune seemed peculiarly to have favoured him with a fair wind, and a higher tide upon the Bar for his great ships, than had almost been ever remembered. The opportunity was lost. Prudence, or a sort of circumspection which does not deserve the name, brought the French Admiral to pause upon his design. Perhaps the reputation of the British Admiral, his known, determined, cool-blooded courage, the judicious arrangement of his ships, the animation of the British crews, which had been strengthened by a thousand volunteers from the merchant ships; all these circumstances, and the recollection that there was no retreating if he failed, were, it may be presumed, magnified in the mind of Comte d'Estaing, and overset at once the boldness of his projects.

Does the Count make a more respectable figure at Rhode Island, when he

came out with a greatly superior fleet to attack that commanded by Lord Howe? Does he dart upon it with the confidence of superiority? Does he attempt to bring his adversary to action by his best sailing ships, which (from his fleet being so greatly superior) he ought to have done, and which a British Admiral, so circumstanced, would most certainly have done? or, Does he come on with the slow and cautious advance of a line of battle, until his adversary takes from him the advantage of the weather-gage? We are too well convinced of the latter, to have any great opinion of this French Admiral's conduct; and that, by his dilatory manœuvres, the weather at length deprived him of those advantages he could only have had from his great superiority of force. And I believe I shall not be thought presumptuous in saying so, when it is recollected, that soon
after

after the storm which scattered the two fleets, one of the French ships (*Le César*) of 74 guns, fell in with the *Ifis*, a 50 gun ship, which she attacked; apparently contemning her force. Here we see all the wonders that may be performed by a well commanded, well appointed, and well disciplined British ship of war; and of which, indeed, I cannot find any thing that bears a comparison, or resemblance, in any of the actions of former wars. The two ships were alone. The French ship outailed the *Ifis*: yet the skill of Captain Rayner, his seaman-like and judicious manœuvres, in taking those advantageous positions which confounded his adversary, the punctual obedience of his officers and crew to his orders, trained to a degree of perfection in the management of the sails, as well as the exercise of the guns, conspired, more, per-

haps, than their undaunted courage, to defeat a ship of 74 guns and 800 men, by one of 50 guns and 350 men *. The enemy's ship was actually beaten, and escaped only by superior sailing. I believe I have no occasion to ask, if this is a circumstance which proves *equal* skill and bravery in our enemy in the last war?

Though our ships individually were in better order, and in higher condition of health and good training for battle, than they had ever been at any former period; yet I would not undertake to defend at all times the conduct of the Admirals who were entrusted to command them. It has been said, that there are heaven-born Generals. If so, it is a sort of profaneness not to employ them; it is presumption, and flying in the face of Heaven, to en-

* The Isis had only two men killed.

trust those with the command of our armies at sea, who have never been successful. We have no occasion to investigate the arcana of Destiny; but to be satisfied, as the greatest nations have been before us, that it is the wisest and best policy to honour, encourage, and employ those Generals who have ever been fortunate. But I proceed to continue my observations on the supposed active and gallant conduct of our enemy.

Do the French claim any credit from the conduct of their Admiral Monsieur Destouches Treville, who engaged the Admirals Arbuthnot and Graves off the Capes of Virginia? Though *we* have not much to be proud of in this battle, except in the gallant conduct of the particular ships which were engaged, especially the *Robust*, commanded by Captain Crosby; yet the French Admiral's conduct evinced that he was worsted, because he aban-

doned the apparent object for which he had risked a battle, of entering the Capes of Virginia, in order to co-operate with the Americans.

And what is there in the conduct of Mons. de Grasse, when he left his anchors off the Capes of Virginia, in Lynn-Haven-Bay, to attack the fleet commanded by Admiral Graves, that is not equivocal; except it is admitted, that a French fleet, greatly superior, is entitled to credit for merely hazarding an onset, and that their object is never to fight a battle out? It was evidently in the power of the French Admiral, Comte de Grasse, to renew the action for several days. It is a fact that he avoided it, and returned to his station in Lynn-Haven-Bay. It has been often said, in the course of the last war, that when the French had any object in view, they did not suffer themselves to be materially diverted from it, But this

this cautious system does not correspond with the French character, as it is described to us, of impatient ardour and impetuosity. Heroes, it is certain, are tempted by the immediate occasion and opportunity which offer; and except the French officers, during the last war, were impressed with a conviction of superiority in the British naval character, their system would have been, to have attacked our fleets wherever they met them, and with a determined resolution to have conquered, or be defeated; especially when they were greatly superior. But what inclines me to think, that in no war whatever British courage had ever made a greater impression on the enterprising character of the French nation than the last, was their suffering Admiral Graves (after the battle off the Capes of Virginia, when it was found expedient to burn the *Terrible* of 74 guns) to go over the Bar

at

at New York. We find, on *Monf. de Grasse's* return to his anchorage within the Capes of Virginia, that he was joined by the Squadron of *Monf. de Baras*, his fleet being made with this reinforcement 33 or 34 ships of the line. The British fleet consisted only of 18 sail. There could not have been a more inviting opportunity. It is well known, that the Bar of New York forbids an entrance to large ships, unless the wind is favourable, and at the top of high-water spring-tides. The British fleet arrived off the Bar, and was detained there a day or two; when only a part of it sailed in. There was more than sufficient time for a great fleet to have followed at leisure; and this required less skill and resolution than it is said *Comte de Grasse* possessed, to have attacked the British fleet with that prospect of destroying it, which is always fair and probable, when the ships which attack are two to one.

Again,

Again, when our fleet returned off the Capes of Virginia, with an intention of forcing its way to York, for the relief of Lord Cornwallis, but arrived too late, the English garrison having previously surrendered; flushed as we may suppose the French Admiral to have been with their conquest, with a mighty fleet of ships, with the temptation of destroying an army* which had been embarked on board of it for the relief of Lord Cornwallis; the enemy remained merely spectators of this little English fleet, which had come to attack them, to brave them, and in fact did really bully them.

Let us now traverse the seas, and notice what during this period happened at home. Here at once it appears, that there was exhibited the same inactivity, the same apparent imbecility in our enemy. Nothing

* 5000 chosen troops,

can surely be more humiliating to this *superb* nation, which presumes to boast of maritime greatness, than to take a retrospective view of their conduct through this war. Superior to us every where, in alliance with Spain, Holland, and the rebel Americans, we see their fleets traversing the seas as transports, or riding in their harbours; for the most part acting upon the defensive, or often insulted by an inferior force. Admiral Darby, with a fleet of 19 sail of the line, fell in with the enemy's fleet of 35 sail, without any attempt on the part of the enemy to descry his force, or bring him to action. We see that excellent officer Admiral Kempelfelt, whose skill and judgment in his profession were only equalled by his bravery, commanding 11 sail of ships, attack, destroy, and take a number of merchant-men, with troops, in the face of a superior fleet of 19 sail of the line, 5 of which were first rates.

rates. He perceived immediately what was to be done, and without hesitation pushed into the fleet between the men of war and merchant ships; did all that was practicable, and retired with his prizes. How would this have sat upon the stomachs of the English nation (had the case been reversed), to have had its trade destroyed in the sight of a fleet superior to the enemy?

Not to lose time, let us take a view of what was performed in the East Indies. Here the French fleet was commanded by a man who possessed great naval talents. The first time that Mons. Suffrein made himself conspicuous, was in his attack upon our fleet commanded by Commodore Johnstone, in Porto Praya Bay, in the neutral island of St. Jago, belonging to the Portugueze; where, though we cannot boast that the conduct of our Commodore was faultless, yet the event of the battle, at the same time that it evinced
undaunted

undaunted resolution in the Commodore, in our officers and sailors of every description, in merchant-men as well as men of war, betrayed, on the part of the enemy, great want of maritime knowledge, of discipline and skill. The British men of war were intermixed with the merchant ships, having anchored as they came into the Bay, without any form or order; so that some of them could not fire at the enemy, without hurting our own ships. Add to this, our Commodore was surprised: not that it appears from his Letter, he had any confidence the French Commodore would pay respect to the law of nations, but that he apprehended an attack so soon as he could discern that the ships were a squadron of the enemy's. Though he had little time to prepare for battle, and several of his seamen were on shore with the boats watering; yet, notwithstanding these disadvantages on the
side

sides of the British fleet, the apparent confusion of the enemy was such, the unseaman-like manner in which they brought their ships up to the attack, exposed them to the well-directed fire of those ships of the English which could bring their guns to bear, and they were beaten out of the Bay with loss and disgrace: and there can be little doubt that, had our fleet been moored in the best position of defence that the shape and anchorage in the Bay admitted, most of the enemy's ships would have shared the fate of the Hannibal*, and perhaps have been captured.

After this action, we next find Mons. Suffrein commanding a fleet in the East Indies, opposed to the British fleet commanded by Sir Edward Hughes. Here we see him brave, skilful, and persevering. He never met our Admiral, who appears

* Hannibal of 74 guns dismasted. See Commodore Johnstone's Letter.

to have been every way worthy of such an opponent, that he did not fairly join with him, with that ardor for battle which evinced the soul of heroism. It is generally acknowledged by the officers who were present (and Englishmen above all others are ever ready, perhaps too ready, to praise their enemies when their conduct is praise-worthy)—I say, it is acknowledged by those who were witnesses in the days of battle, that Monf. Suffrein did every thing, made every exertion, that was possible in the power of a great Admiral, to defeat our fleet. But, in doing justice to the enemy, let us not descend from those heights of pride to which every Englishman should be elevated when he becomes a spectator of these battles. Let it be remembered, that this gallant Frenchman commanded a fleet always, except in the last battle, greatly superior to Sir Edward Hughes; and that such was the
steady

steady and uniform gallantry of the British fleet, never more than half manned, that though attacked with uncommon spirit, it remained unshaken in its firmness; and it is acknowledged, that one of the enemy's ships struck—though from change of winds she was not taken possession of.

From the East let us traverse the Equator again, and view the conduct of Comte de Grasse, who we find had landed an army under the command of the Marquis de Bouille at the island of St. Christopher's, which had capitulated, except the fortress of Brimstone Hill, which held out, although invested on all sides by an army of 7 or 8000 men; whilst the French Admiral, with a fleet of 31 sail of the line *, had

* List of the Comte de Grasse's Squadron at St. Kitt's.

	Guns		Guns
La Ville de Paris	110	Le Languedoc	84
La Coronne	84	L'Auguste	84
			Guns

had anchored in Basseterre Road, to co-operate with the land forces. Sir Samuel Hood, who commanded at this time the British fleet, consisting of 22 sail of the line, sails from Antigua with the resolution of attacking the enemy's fleet at anchor; but the enemy anticipating his de-

	Guns		Guns
Le St. Esprit	84	Le Conquérant	74
Le Duc de Bourgogne	84	Le Destin	74
*Le Triomphant	84	Le Palmier	74
Le Neptune	80	Le Sceptre	74
Le Hercule	74	Le Bien Aimé	74
Le Pluton	74	Le Magnifique	74
*Le Brave	74	Le Dauphin Royal	74
Le Hektor	74	Le Bourgogne	74
Le César	74	Le Scipion	74
Le Magnanime	74	Le Marseillois	74
Le Souverain	74	L'Eveille	64
Le Citoyen	74	L'Ardent	64
Le Glorieux	74	Le Jason	64
Le Zele	74	Le Sagittaire	54
Le Northumberland	74		

* Joined at St. Kitt's.

sign,

sign, stood out to sea. Sir Samuel manœuvres all night to keep the wind, and at break of day, being a-breast of the island of Nevis, makes the signal for the line of battle, standing in shore; which obliged the French Admiral, who, with his fleet was to leeward, to do the same, and of course to form by their leewardmost ships. This increased the distance of the two fleets, and opened to the British the road of Basseterre. It appears that the temptation instantly operated upon the judgment of the British Admiral. He seized the opportunity (the only one possible of gaining any advantage over a force so greatly superior) and indicated, by signal, his intention of steering for the anchorage. Some little time was lost by the leading ships not clearly comprehending the signals; so that the fleet was brought-to, and a frigate dispatched to explain to every ship in the van the Admiral's intentions.

This delay permitted the French Admiral to approach; and our ships being obliged to bear away in succession, in order to round the point of Nevis, the two fleets drew within gun-shot of each other. The French Admiral, at this time penetrating the design of Sir Samuel Hood, made all the sail he could set, and fell furiously upon the rear of our fleet; which, however, proceeded steadily on; each ship anchoring in succession, in a line of battle, agreeably to the signal flying; the British Admiral having twice backed his main top-sail for the rear to close, and at the same time to give the ships in the van time to be placed at their anchorage. This allowed the enemy to range up a-breast of the centre. The conduct of Comte de Grasse at this period seemed to be that of an angry man, rather than that of a great Admiral occupied how he should best employ the force of a superior fleet, to destroy
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an audacious intruder. He came on with a press of sail, passing many of the leading ships of his line, and firing furiously at every ship he approached. However, when he had penetrated as far as the Barfleur, Sir Samuel Hood's ship, his wrath abated, and he bore up out of the Bay, each ship following their Admiral. But the British fleet, being nearly placed before the rear of the enemy's ships, came up; these had also a share in the action, by firing as they passed at our ships at anchor.

The anchorage of our fleet was most judicious; the ships occupying the whole space from the Salt Pans, at the head of the Bay, to the outer part of Basseterre Road; the van ship being anchored so near the shore, that it would be impossible for the enemy to weather her; and so nearly upon the edge of the bank, that the enemy's fleet could not anchor with-

out it, and beyond the range of a shell from the batteries at Basseterre, at this time in the enemy's possession. This brilliant manœuvre was at once so mortifying and distressing to the enemy, that *Monf. de Grasse* seemed determined the following morning to try the weight of his fleet, against the advantage of position, and advanced accordingly, his van ship leading in with the greatest gallantry. The attack lasted for upwards of two hours. Each ship, firing along our line from the van, and passing under the stern of the last ship in the rear, stood in towards our frigates at anchor in shore; then wore, stood out again, and prepared for a second attack. In the mean time *Sir Samuel Hood* strengthened his rear, and anchored it more in the form of a crescent; which was no sooner done, than the enemy renewed the attack upon the centre, and rear. But finding it impossible to make
any

any impression, having lost a number of men, and many of their ships being disabled, they desisted from all further attempts, and were obliged to keep the sea, much harassed, often disordered by squalls of wind, to the amusement of the British sailors, who remained in comfort with their ships at anchor. This manœuvre, which had been a subject of admiration, even to the enemy, was undoubtedly the saving of Jamaica. The force which had been landed from the French fleet, to assist in the various labours of a siege, was of course withdrawn, and sent on board their ships; and a great part of the French army was also diverted from giving their assistance at the siege *, for the protection of the town of Basseterre, which was always threatened by the British fleet;—besides

* Brimstone Hill is 9 miles distant from the town of Basseterre.

the encouragement it had given to the brave garrison, the veteran General Frazer advising Sir Samuel Hood, that he did not despair of being able to defend the Hill; and which he certainly did to the last, having held out 35 days; though the Marquis de Bouille, the French General, had declared, that if he had not expected to have taken it in as many hours, he would not have landed. Had it surrendered ten days sooner, Jamaica must have fallen; and De Grasse, greatly superior to the British fleet, would have formed a junction with the Spaniards at Cape François, before the arrival of Sir George Rodney. It would have been a fortunate circumstance, indeed, if Sir George had arrived three or four days sooner, so as to have joined Sir Samuel Hood. St. Kitt's would have been saved, and the French Admiral compelled to fight, or to have abandoned the army
on

on shore.—I have been more particular in detailing the circumstances of this celebrated manœuvre, because there had been the same malignant spirit of envy at work, to detract from its merit, that we every where in history find pursuing the characters of illustrious men. But to proceed :

The garrison of Brimstone Hill is at length obliged to surrender, the British fleet still at anchor: when it answering no purpose to remain longer where he was, Sir Samuel Hood notified to his fleet his intention of sailing. The enemy had been reinforced by the *Triomphant* of 84, and the *Brave* of 74 guns—now making 33 sail of the line. The French General, the Marquis de Bouille, speaking from the ardor of an enterprising and persevering spirit, told an English officer who was sent with a flag of truce, that he reckoned upon the certain destruction of the British

tish fleet. Now let us read the naval history of this country, and examine if the conduct of the French before had given us reason to believe, they would on such an occasion as this have suffered a British Admiral to depart without an action? Certain, however, it is, that so soon as the Hill surrendered, the French Admiral withdrew his ships and anchored in the road of Nevis, at the distance of four leagues, and to the windward of our fleet, not leaving a single frigate or boat in the way; in order, as it were, to open the door as wide as possible, for a troublesome intruder to depart—in want of bread, in want of water, and, what was worse, in want of powder *. Sir Samuel joined Sir George Rodney a few days after, who had arrived (as I have said before) only a few days too late.

* Some of the ships in the rear had fired away all their powder, in the three attacks of the enemy's fleet.

We shall now follow Monsieur de Grasse to Fort Royal, Martinique, and notice the preparations of an armament avowedly destined to form a junction with the Spaniards for the conquest of Jamaica. Notwithstanding the late shabby behaviour of their fleet at St. Kitts, there seemed a sort of inconsistent confidence in our enemy at this period. They did not think it at all necessary to conceal their intentions; and in sight of our fleet, which was now superior, they sailed the moment they were ready. The British fleet was at anchor at this time at Gros Islet, St. Lucia; and on the 8th of April our cruizers announced, that the French fleet was under sail in Fort Royal Bay. Sir George Rodney instantly made the signal to weigh; and in a very short time he was at sea, and in pursuit of the enemy. Before night, the sternmost of the French were seen from the mast-heads. The pursuit continued;
and,

and, before break of day, their lights were seen by all the fleet. Unluckily, our fleet was too soon brought-to; for, when daylight came, it was observed, that, if we had continued the pursuit half an hour longer, we should have surrounded seven sail of the line, and a large fleet of merchant ships, which were a-stern of the body of the enemy's fleet five or six leagues. The action that was afterwards brought on upon this day, the 9th of April, has been very properly related in Sir George Rodney's Letter. It is sufficient for Englishmen to know, that our van resisted the whole force of the French fleet for many hours. After this day's action, the French Admiral industriously endeavoured to avoid a battle, plying to the windward between the islands of Dominica and Guadeloupe. In doing this, on the night of the 11th, one of his ships lost her foremast, by running foul of another; and
at

at day-light she was observed to leeward, towed by a frigate. Four ships were immediately dispatched in chase *; and the French Admiral was obliged either to give her up, or risque a battle. He determined on the latter, and immediately bore down on the British fleet. Our ships in chase were recalled; each fleet formed into a line of battle, and met on contrary tacks; the British on the starboard tack, with an inverted line; Admiral Drake and his division leading, instead of Sir Samuel Hood; occasioned by some of the ships of the latter having been disabled on the 9th. The water was perfectly smooth, the sky serene and clear, with a fine commanding breeze of wind; and the relative position of the two fleets approaching to the battle, beautifully grand and animating. To an observer not personally concerned

* The Valiant, Monarch, Centaur, of 74 guns; and the Belliqueux, of 64.

in the conflict, the impending shock must have been awful and tremendous. At length, at half past seven, the signal was displayed on both sides for battle, and soon after for close action. The van division, which was gallantly commanded by Admiral Drake, instantly received and returned the broadsides of the enemy; and in an instant all was involved in smoke. The fleets advancing, and the action becoming general, nothing is heard for hours but the repeated vollies of broadsides. Towards ten o'clock the smoke began to clear away; the battle raged with less fury; and it was observed that one of the enemy's ships * was totally dismasted, and that the Prince George had lost her foremast. It was also perceived, that the British ships a-head of Sir George Rodney in the line, had passed to leeward of the whole of the

* The Glorieux.

enemy's line; that Sir George had failed through their line, four ships a-stern of their Admiral in the centre; and that Sir Samuel Hood in the rear had failed through the enemy's line also, leaving Monsieur de Grasse to leeward of him, and keeping nine sail of the enemy to the windward of him. Here the battle continued to rage, the wind having been lulled by the din of cannon to a perfect calm, so that some of the ships of this division got out their boats to tow; and the action lasted until several of the ships had fired away all their powder; particularly the Monarch, which had tacked, and was engaged with the last ship of the enemy that had passed to the windward of our rear division. At this time Sir Samuel Hood sent a boat on board the Centaur, with orders for her to sustain the Monarch, and attack the ship she was engaged with. At the same time he made the signal for each ship of his division to crowd

crowd sail after the enemy, to prevent them from uniting with their Admiral, who at this time was endeavouring to rally his ships, which were sometimes retreating, and sometimes turning their broadsides to the British ships that approached them; but they all appeared in panic and confusion, and greatly disabled. At four o'clock the *César* surrendered to the *Centaur*, after an obstinate defence, and not before she was run on board, and the colours struck by the British sailors *. The *Hector* struck soon afterwards to the *Canada* and *Alcide*; and at half past five the *Belliqueux* ran along-side the *Ardent* who surrendered immediately. The impetuous courage of Sir Samuel Hood in the *Barfleur*, pushing into their fleet with his studding sails set,

* The *César* caught fire at eight o'clock, and blew up at ten. Two hundred French prisoners perished; and two lieutenants, a lieutenant of marines, boatswain, and thirty-seven seamen belonging to the *Centaur*.

had

had advanced him before the bow of the *Ville de Paris*. It was at this period that Comte de Grasse saw that all prospect of escaping was vain—an English Admiral being between him and the ships which ought to have sustained him. The sun was half sunk in the horizon when Sir Samuel sheered towards the French Admiral, to make sure of so glorious a conquest, which was soon obtained; and the *Ville de Paris* was taken possession of, after a short but sharp contest, by the *Barfleur*.—Whatever the panic might have been before, the dismay of the enemy's fleet, on seeing the flag of France surrender, may now easily be imagined. But the enemy was soon relieved from further anxiety by the British Admiral, Sir George Rodney, making the signal for the fleet to bring-to; and the British fleet was accordingly brought-to.—I am not disposed to argue, that we reaped the full harvest of

this victory; but I do insist upon it, that no fleet was ever more completely beaten, conquered, defeated, or overthrown, call it by what name you please, than this French fleet; whilst the victorious fleet appeared, in comparison, to have suffered very little damage. The Prince George had lost her foremast; but in other respects she was as fit for action as when the fight began, and had only nine men killed. Some ships had not lost a single man. One cannot help inquiring how it happens, that there was such difference in the havoc that was made in the two fleets. The French fleet most undoubtedly came boldly on, and did fire their guns. Is it that they fail in skill—in the management and pointing of their guns? or is it, that, when they come to close action, their skill and presence of mind forsake them, and they are under an influence which British sailors are strangers to, in the moment of danger?

danger? Be this as it will, the event of this battle clearly proves, that there is a wonderful difference in the effects produced by British and French broadsides. Englishmen have reason to be proud of this victory, so fully demonstrating the superior naval process of their nation; and that, instead of its spirit being upon the decline, this glorious 12th of April proved beyond comparison its splendour, and gave us trophies which on no former occasion we could ever boast of. It is certain, that history does not furnish us with an example of a similar victory. I expect indeed to find cavillers, and desponding drivellers who gossip in coffee-houses, and will not allow any thing has been done well that was not done *in their time*—but I challenge them to bring an instance, where the *great fleets* of France and England have been drawn up together *in line of battle*, and have fought *when their force*

has been nearly equal *, of any ship being taken. Here it has happened, that we have not only taken their ships—but their Admiral's ship, a first rate, is borne into one of our ports, and the French Admiral personally exhibited to the gazing inhabitants of our metropolis. I do not

* The great seafights in this description, between the two nations, are :

The battle off Malaga. See Campbell's Admirals, Vol. III. p. 72.

The battle of Bantry Bay—Admiral Herbert. Ibid. Vol. . p.

The battles in the East Indies—Admiral Pocock and Monsieur d'Aché. Ibid. Vol. IV. p. 131.

The battle in the East Indies—Commodore Peyton and Monsieur Bourdonnois. Ibid. Vol. IV. p. 58.

The unfortunate battle of Minorca—Admiral Byng and Monsieur Galiffonniere. Ibid. Vol. IV. p. 80.

The battle of Matthews and Lestock I do not enumerate, as the French fleet was combined with that of Spain.

In Sir Edward Hawke's victory over Monsieur Conflans, the fleets were not drawn up in a line; and it may be said that the enemy fled without a battle, as we had not above five or six ships that got into action.

mean

mean to insult this unfortunate, and certainly brave man; but to prove, that the character of our enemy, as a great maritime nation, has never suffered such disgrace.

To say that the flag of France was not abandoned, on the 12th of April, by its fleet, is absurd. Was not the *Ville de Paris* left the last ship, when pressed by the British fleet? Was any French ship in the way, when the *Barfleur* ranged along-side of her? Did either of her seconds attempt to stop the career of the *Barfleur*, by laying her on board, or dropping astern to take up the fire of the approaching enemy? Certainly not. Who then can be attended to with patience, who asserts, that the ships composing the French fleet did not abandon their flag?

Before I quit this subject, I shall offer some remarks on the two Letters sent home by Sir George Rodney after the

battle, and endeavour to rectify some mistakes which have been imbibed, and may be transmitted to posterity by the historian, if not corrected. In the first Letter, Sir George speaks of the exertions and gallant conduct of Sir Samuel Hood in the warmest encomiums. In the next Letter*

Sir

* Admiralty Office, May 18, 1782.

Lord Cranston, one of the Captains of His Majesty's ship the *Formidable*, and Captain Byron of the *Andromache*, in which ship his Lordship came passenger, arrived early this morning with dispatches from Admiral Sir George Bridges Rodney, Bart. to Mr. Stephens, of which the following are copies :

SIR, *Formidable, at Sea, April 14, 1782.*

IT has pleased God, out of his divine Providence, to grant to His Majesty's arms a most complete victory over the fleet of his enemy commanded by the Count de Grasse, who is himself captured, with the *Ville de Paris* and four more ships of the fleet, besides one sunk in the action. This important victory was obtained the 12th instant, after a battle which lasted with unremitting fury from seven in the morning till half past six in the evening, when the setting
sun

Sir George says, he has dispatched Sir Samuel Hood and his division in quest of the

fun put an end to the contest. Both fleets have greatly suffered: but it is with the highest satisfaction I can assure their Lordships, that though the masts, sails, rigging and hulls of the British fleet are damaged, yet the loss of men has been but small, considering the length of the battle and the close action they so long sustained, and in which both fleets looked upon the honour of their King and Country to be most essentially concerned. The great supply of naval stores lately arrived in the West Indies, will, I flatter myself, soon repair all the damages His Majesty's fleet has sustained. The gallant behaviour of the officers and men of the fleet I had the honour to command, has been such as must for ever endear them to all lovers of their King and Country. The noble behaviour of my second in command, Sir Samuel Hood, who in both actions most conspicuously exerted himself, demands my warmest encomiums. My third in command, Rear-Admiral Drake, who with his division led the battle on the 12th instant, deserves the highest praise; nor less can be given to Commodore Affleck, for his gallant behaviour in leading the centre division. My own Captain, Sir Charles Douglas, merits every thing I can possibly say: his unremitted diligence and activity greatly eased me in the unavoidable fatigue of the day. In short, I want words to express how sensible I am of the me-

the enemy, because it had suffered least,
being in the rear (on the 12th). Who
can

ritorious conduct of all the Captains, Officers, and Men, who had a share in this glorious victory, obtained by their gallant exertions. The enemy's whole army, consisting of 5500 men, were on board their ships of war. The destruction among them must be prodigious, as for the greatest part of the action every gun told; and their Lordships may judge what havoc must have been made, when the Formidable fired near eighty broadsides. Inclosed I have the honour to send for their Lordships' inspection the British and French lines of battle, with an account of the killed and wounded, and damages sustained by his Majesty's fleet. Lord Cranston, who acted as one of the Captains of the Formidable during both actions, and to whose gallant behaviour I am much indebted, will have the honour of delivering these dispatches. To him I must refer their Lordships for every minute particular they may wish to know, he being perfectly master of the whole transaction. That the British flag may for ever flourish in every quarter of the globe, is the most ardent wish of him who has the honour of being, with great regard, SIR,

Your most obedient humble Servant,

G. B. RODNEY.

To Philip Stephens, Esq.

SIR,

can read this letter without feeling something more than astonishment, when at the same time we are presented with vouchers,

SIR,

Formidable, at Sea, April 20, 1782.

SINCE my last dispatches of the 14th instant, sent by Lord Cranston in his Majesty's ship *Andromache*, I must desire you will be pleased to acquaint their Lordships, that the fleet under my command, in their way to reconnoitre the bays of Basseterre, St. Christopher's, and St. Eustatius, and observe if the enemy's fleet had attempted to shelter themselves in those bays, were becalmed for three days under the island of Guadalupe; in which time we were employed in repairing the shattered condition of the ships under my command. The moment we had a breeze, I dispatched frigates to St. Christopher's and St. Eustatius. In the latter road, instead of the vast crowd of ships that used to be anchored, there were only two small schooners; at St. Christopher's, none but armed ships. Being by this convinced, that the enemy's defeated fleet were gone to leeward, I dispatched Rear-Admiral Sir Samuel Hood, whose division (having being in the rear on the day of battle) had received much less damage than the van or centre, to proceed, with all the sail they could make, to the west end of St. Domingo, in hopes that he might pick up some of the straggling disabled ships of the enemy; and I am now following

vouchers, signed by the Admiral, which conveys a flat contradiction to his position*? In these we see, that Sir Samuel Hood's division had lost nearly as many men as the two other divisions put together. It does not signify whether it happened on the 9th or 12th; it was done in destroying the French fleet. But on the 12th it lost more men than the van division, and upon the whole suffered more; and at the period when the Letter was written, the Royal Oak (without main

lowing myself with the remainder of the fleet to join him off Cape Tiberoon. It is with great satisfaction I acquaint their Lordship's, that the enemy's battering cannon, travelling carriages, and train of artillery, are in the ships captured; which are not only a loss to the enemy, but may be of the greatest service in the island of Jamaica. Inclosed I send duplicates of my dispatches by the *Andromache*, and have the honour to be, &c.

G. B. RODNEY.

To Philip Stephens, Esq.

* See the list of killed and wounded, in the annexed Line of Battle, &c.

LINE OF BATTLE

ON THE 12th OF APRIL, 1782,

When the Action commenced, the Fleet on the Starboard Tack.

VAN DIVISION, Rear-Admiral FRANCIS SAMUEL DRAKE.

Ships	Commanders	Guns	Men	K.	W.	Officers killed and wounded.
Marlborough	Taylor Penny	74	600	3	16	
Arrogant	Samuel Cornish	74	600	4	11	
Alcide	Char. Thompson	74	600	5	17	
Nonfuch	William Truscott	64	500	3	3	
Conqueror	George Balfour	74	600	7	23	
Princessa	{ Fran. S. Drake } { C. Knatchbull }	70	577	3	22	Lieutenants Dundas and M'Douall wounded; Lieutenant Laban of the Marines ditto.
Prince George	John Williams	90	750	9	24	
Torbay	J. Lewis Gidoin	74	600	10	25	Lieutenant Mounier of Marines killed.
Anson	William Blair	64	500	3	13	Captain Blair killed.
Fame	Robert Barber	74	600	3	12	
Ruffell	James Saumarez	74	600	10	29	
Total				60	184	

CENTRE DIVISION. Admiral Sir GEORGE BRIDGES RODNEY.

America	Sam. Thompson	64	500	1	1	Lieutenant Collowhill killed; Lieut. Trelawney wounded.
Hercules	Henry Savage	74	600	7	19	Lieutenant Hobert killed; Captain Savage wounded.
Prothée	Charles Buckner	64	500	5	25	Mr. Love, Master, wounded.
Resolution	Ld. Rob. Manners	74	600	4	35	Captain wounded, since dead.
Agamemnon	Benj. Caldwell	64	500	14	24	Lieutenants Incledon and Brice wounded, latter since dead.
Duke	Allan Gardner	90	750	13	60	Lieut. Cornish, Mr. Cooper, Maf. Mr. Scott, Boatf. wounded.
Formidable	{ Sir Geo. Rodney } { Sir C. Douglas } { John Symonds * }	90	750	15	39	Lieutenant Hale killed; Captain Bell and Lieutenant Harris of Marines wounded.
Namur	Robert Fanshaw	90	750	6	25	
Saint Albans	John Inglis	64	500	0	6	
Canada	Hon. W. Cornwallis	74	600	12	23	
Repulse	Tho. Dumaresque	64	500	3	11	Captain of Marines and Master wounded.
Ajax	Nich. Charington	74	600	9	40	Mr. John Elliott, first Lieutenant, wounded.
Bedford	{ Com. Affleck } { Thomas Graves }	74	600	0	17	
Total				89	329	

REAR DIVISION. Rear-Admiral Sir SAMUEL HOOD, Bart.

Prince William	Geo. Wilkinfon	64	500	0	0	
Magnificent	Robert Linzee	74	600	6	11	Captain Bagg of the Marines wounded.
Centaur	John Inglefield	74	650	7	13	Lieutenant Hayes of the ship, with the Lieutenant of Marines, Boatswain, two Midshipmen, and 37 men blown up in the César.
Belliqueux	Alex. Sutherland	64	500	4	10	
Warrior	Sir James Wallace	74	600	5	21	Mr. Stone, Master, wounded.
Monarch	Francis Reynolds	74	600	16	33	
Barfleur	{ Sir S. Hood, Bt. } { Captain Knight }	90	750	10	37	
Valiant	P. Cr. Goodall	74	650	10	28	Lieut. Wimbleton killed; Lieut. Brown, and Maf. wounded.
Yarmouth	Anthony Parry	64	500	14	33	
Montague	George Bowen	74	600	12	31	Mr. Cade, Master, killed; Lieutenants Breedon and Buchan of Marines wounded.
Alfred	William Bayne	74	600	12	40	Captain killed.
Royal Oak	Thomas Burnett	74	600	21	40	Mr. Gwatkin first Lieutenant, and Boatswain killed; Captain of Marines wounded.
Total				117	293	
Centaur's men blown up in the César				37	0	
				154	293	

* Lord Cranston also assisted as one of the Captains, of whom honourable mention is made in Sir George Rodney's Letter.

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top or topmast) and Centaur, both ships of the rear division *, were absent with prizes, and did not join the fleet till they returned to Jamaica. It was from the circumstance of Sir Samuel Hood's division being in the rear, that it suffered most. It fell calm when the enemy's van came abreast of the rear division; and here the battle lasted as long as any battle can last—that is, so long as ships have powder to fire.

The exertions of Sir Samuel Hood were certainly very great †. Being a subordinate Admiral, he could not make the general signal to chase the beaten and flying enemy, agreeably to the Fighting Instructions; but he made each ship's signal of his own division, to crowd sail after them. It is indeed understood, that a difference of

* The Alcide, of the van division, was also absent.

† The Barfleur having her maintop-sail-yard shot away, another yard was got up, and a new sail bent, whilst the firing continued.

opinion took place betwixt the two Commanders, in what manner the victory could be best improved; Sir Samuel Hood contending vehemently, that the enemy's broken fleet should be pursued so long as a ship remained untaken. But we would not willingly suppose, that even this could excite any ungenerous sentiment in the breast of Sir George. It is more agreeable to believe, that the letter had been signed in the hurry of business, and that so glaring a contradiction had escaped the Admiral's notice; as well as another mistake which appears in his first Letter, where he says, the centre division was led by Commodore Affleck. The rear of the centre division was, certainly, gallantly brought up by the Commodore; but it was *led* by Captain Samuel Thompson of the *America*, the oldest seaman in the fleet. Why the credit of leading the division should have been taken from this gentleman,

gentleman, at the expence of truth, we cannot account for, otherwise than by supposing it to have proceeded from inadvertency. I return to the operations of the fleet.

Sir Samuel Hood was at length sent with his division in pursuit of the enemy's scattered squadron; and on the 19th of April, in the Mona Passage, gave chase to two line of battle ships and three frigates. One of the frigates escaped, but the rest were taken; the Jason and Caton of 64 guns each, and the Aimable and Ceres frigates. I should not do justice to the character of Captain Goodall of the Valiant, if I did not mention his active gallantry in this service. It was to be apprehended, that both the line of battle ships would endeavour to run ashore, from which they were at no great distance. The Valiant outsailing the rest of the ships, came up first with the enemy

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being followed by the Monarch, Captain Reynolds); and running close along-side the Caton, the sternmost, she surrendered without making the least resistance. Captain Goodall, eager to attack the other ship (the Jason) before she reached the shore, left the Caton to be taken possession of by the ships coming up; and, pushing on with a press of sail, soon brought the Jason to action. This ship defended herself for 40 minutes; when being greatly disabled, and having lost a number of men, she struck. The Valiant received little or no damage in the action. Thus we see two line of battle ships taken with less difficulty in this war, than ever happened in any former war; which may be proved by comparing actions*, when ships were similarly circumstanced.

I shall

* In the war before the last, the *Raisonné*, a French line of battle ship of 64 guns, was chased by a fleet of
British

I shall take occasion in this place (quitting the great war of fleets for a while) to shew, that in the actions of small squadrons, and single ships, the French are

British ships. The Dorsetshire, of 66 guns, outstripped the rest, and got along-side of her; a furious action commenced, and was sustained with equal vivacity on both sides for two hours; when the Achilles of 60 guns coming up, put an end to the conflict. The Raisonné was obliged to surrender; but her adversary had suffered equally in the battle. The Orphée, a French ship of 64 guns, displayed the same kind of brilliant obstinacy in the same war; and did not surrender to the Revenge of 70 guns, when chased by a fleet, until a second English ship came up; and the action had been so well contested, that both ships had equally suffered. There is no instance of any thing similar during the last war. There was a point of honour maintained by these two ships, which determined them not to surrender to single ships, though there was a certainty of being taken when once brought to action by the ships coming up. The capture of the Foudroyant in the war before the last, is a glorious proof of a British man of war (the Monmouth) doing her duty. But no person can say, that the French Commander did not defend his ship as long as there was any fighting in her; and he did not surrender until his main-mast fell, and another English ship came up.

not

not such obstinate enemies to contend with, as they have been. The *Prothée*, a French ship of 64 guns, was chased the last war by a fleet returning from Gibraltar, under the command of Admiral Digby. The *Resolution* of 74 guns, commanded by Lord Robert Manners, and bearing the broad pendant of Sir Chaloner Ogle, was the first ship up with her; and upon firing a broadside the enemy surrendered.

The *Pégase*, a new French line of battle ship of 74 guns, in company with two other line of battle ships, was chased by a squadron commanded by Admiral Barrington. Night came on; but Captain John Jarvis, of the *Foudroyant*, kept sight of her, and continued the chase until he got along-side of her; when the superior fire of his well disciplined ship soon compelled her to surrender, having lost a number of her men; whilst the *Foudroyant* lost only one. I think it almost

almost needless to go further to prove, that a French man of war was taken with greater ease during the last, than in the war before, or in any former war. Yet nibblers at reputation had the *shrewdness* to discover, that the British ship had three guns more on a side than the *Pegasus*; and, because the latter was taken with ease, would scarcely allow that there was any merit in the captor. But that Captain has certainly the most merit, who subdues his enemy with least loss to himself. It not only shews the effect of deliberate skill and courage, but also evidently proves that his ship's company have been better trained and disciplined. Cavillers, notwithstanding, inflamed with envy, or actuated by party spirit, have at one moment endeavoured to take from the merit, and obscure the lustre of meritorious actions, and at other times, praise conduct highly censurable; insomuch that

the historian will be puzzled to distinguish officers who have performed their duty, from those who have not. In the former war, on the contrary, there was a tenacious pride for the reputation of the service at large; and instead of any attempt to diminish the merit of a commander, he had at least all the credit he was entitled to. Captain Jervis obtained the most honourable mark of his Sovereign's approbation that a military man can receive, being invested with the order of the Bath. And when it is recollected, that the safety of the kingdom absolutely depends upon the exertions of our Naval Commanders, it will, I believe, be readily admitted, that no man has a better title to this honourable distinction, than the officer who takes from the enemy a 74 gun ship.

I have another case in point, which I am proud to mention, to corroborate my opinion

opinion of the inferior prowess of the French as a maritime power, during the *last war*. This is the capture of the Solitaire French man of war, of 64 guns. The Solitaire was with the French what we call a crack ship; that is, she was supposed to be in the best condition for service, and a prime sailer; and as such was (in company with another ship of the same force) cruising to windward of Martinique, when she was chased by the fleet under the command of Sir Richard Hughes. The Ruby (Capt. John Collins) of 64 guns came up with her, and a very sharp action ensued. In forty minutes the Solitaire struck her colours, being totally disabled and silenced, with a great number of men killed and wounded: whereas the Ruby lost but four men; and was so little disabled, that, in all probability, she would have taken such another ship immediately with great ease.

Among the officers who seemed covetous of fame, whom Fortune favoured, and who never slighted her favours, we find Sir James Wallace, commanding the Experiment of 50 guns (having previously distinguished himself under the command of Lord Howe in America, for which he had received the honour of knighthood), having with him the Pallas of 32 guns, Capt. Davy; Unicorn of 20 guns, Capt. Ford; Fortune of 14 guns, Capt. Hamilton; and Cabot brig of 12 guns, Capt. Dodd. With these he destroyed or captured three frigates which had taken shelter under the cover of a fort in Concale Bay, on the coast of France. The impatience of Sir James Wallace to silence this fort, had run his ship a ground, in a position that exposed him to be raked, until the fort blew up. This circumstance, however, did not prevent the commanders of the other ships from setting
fire

fire to two of the French frigates, and bringing off the third, the Danae, of 32 guns. Sir James seldom went to sea that he did not fall in with the enemy's ships. In the Nonfuch of 64 guns, he took the Belle Poule, and destroyed the Legere on the coast of France, both frigates of 36 guns. In the same ship he had a severe conflict with the Active of 74 guns. In this instance it is to be lamented, that he evinced rather an over-greediness of glory; for being ordered to chace from the fleet, and having soon discovered that the chace was a large ship of the line, he disdained to ask for that assistance, which would have been sent to him if he had made known to his Admiral the size of the enemy. But with a croud of sail, having lost sight of the fleet before it was dark, he continued the pursuit, until he ran on board the enemy's ship in the night, and engaged her until both parties

separated greatly disabled. In the morning Sir James renewed the attack, and was very roughly handled by the superior force and weight of metal of his opponent. The French commander, however, acted only upon the defensive, continuing his course, and leaving the Nonsuch in a condition unable to pursue.

I shall take occasion in this place to contrast the conduct of a British commander, under similar circumstances, with the conduct of the commander of the Active. Captain Salter, of the Santa Margareta of 36 guns, fell in with the French fleet on the coast of America, and was chased by several ships. One frigate of the enemy, outfailing the rest, continued the pursuit until the French fleet were out of sight; when she shortened sail and tacked. Capt. Salter instantly tacked his ship, and chased in his turn the pursuer; which being observed by the Captain of
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the French frigate, he instantly retacked, in order to accept the daring challenge. Both frigates were of equal force, as to number of guns; but the enemy had more men, her shot were heavier, and she was encouraged by having a fleet at her back:—whereas the British Captain ran a risque which even success could scarcely justify; for, had his ship met with those disasters which are the mere effects of chance; had he lost a top-mast or a top-sail yard, he was sure, even if victorious, of not escaping the enemy's advancing fleet. It appears, however, that these prudential reasons had no weight with the British commander and his gallant crew, who were impatient for battle. The ships met, and manœuvred to close with each other on the same tack; and after a desperate action of an hour and a quarter, the French frigate * was

* L'Amazone, of 36 guns, commanded by the Viscount Montguite.

filenced, and compelled to surrender; her Captain with 70 of his men being slain, and 70 wounded. Among the killed were two Lieutenants; and the Second Captain and the rest of the officers were dangerously wounded. The British frigate had only one midshipman and four seamen killed, and the boatswain and 16 seamen wounded. Such intrepidity should always be crowned with success; but the following morning Captain Salter was obliged to abandon his prize, being closely pursued by the whole of the French fleet. I cannot find, in the history of our former wars, that in any action between frigates *, there ever were such evident proofs of superior skill

* The French frigates before the last war were upon a much smaller scale; yet there is not an instance where they did not defend themselves with great obstinacy. The *Arethusa* of 32 guns, the war before the last, though she had lost her maintopmast, resisted for a considerable time the efforts of two frigates of equal force, the *Venus* and *Thames*,

skill and prowess, when all the circumstances are considered, as what I have just related. It appears that the English frigate had only a short time given her to try her force, her adversary being backed by a fleet. And perhaps with the greatest possible degree of human bravery, and the utmost perfection of naval skill and discipline, it would not have been possible to do more execution: or to put a ship of equal force out of fighting condition in a shorter space of time than Captain Salter did; and to lose in the action so few men as were killed in the English frigate.

Thames. The Brune also, a French frigate of 32 guns, in the same war, fought the Venus of 36 for two hours, and did not surrender until engaged also by the Juno of 32. The Danae of 36 guns, a large French frigate, similar to those we had to contend with last war, resisted a long time the united efforts of the Melampe of 36, and the Southampton, of 32 guns, before she struck. The Bellona French frigate, of 32 guns, maintained the fight gallantly for four hours against the Vestal of the same force, commanded by Captain Samuel Hood, before she surrendered.

Captain

Captain Pownall also, in the Apollo of 32 guns, fell in with the Oiseau, a French frigate of the same number of guns, on the coast of France, and after an action of an hour and a half compelled her to surrender. The slaughter on board the enemy's ship was considerable, but the Apollo suffered not materially. This excellent and intrepid officer was killed in battle afterwards, engaging a French ship, which escaped by running ashore on the coast of Flanders.

Of the French ships that were taken in the last war, the Capricieux frigate appears to have made the most respectable defence, when attacked with great gallantry by Captain Waldegrave, of the Prudente frigate of 36 guns, and Captain Cadogan, of the Licorne of 32. But it is certain, that French frigates of inferior force did as much in the war before.

As

As the great ships of both nations generally sailed in large fleets, it was very rare that single ships of the line met. We find, however, a private ship of war (if she may be so called, for she was commanded by King's officers, with 250 King's troops on board acting as marines) was met, in the Irish Channel, by the *Bienfaisant*, Captain Macbride. This ship of the enemy had, with reason, created great alarm amongst our merchants, being a ship of 64 guns, called the *Comte d'Artois*, commanded by *Monf. Clonard*, an active, enterprizing young man, born in France of Irish parents. In the midst of a large convoy of English merchant ships, she was surprised at day-light by an English line of battle ship being along-side of her. *Monf. Clonard*, it seems, had trained his people for boarding; and to lure the English Captain to approach him, had hoisted English colours, that he might
grapple

grapple the Bienfaisant. But he unluckily met with a man highly skilful in his profession; who hailing the enemy, dared him to shew his proper colours, at the same time he fired into him; and availing himself of his seamanship, as well as of the superior sailing of the Bienfaisant, took such positions as effectually disappointed the French Captain in his project of boarding; at the same moment raking his opponent fore and aft with such effect, that the enemy was soon compelled to surrender. The Charon, Captain Symonds, having also come up at the close of the action, the enemy's ship was greatly disabled, and lost a number of men; whilst the Bienfaisant had suffered so little, that no person could have told she had been in action. This happened, no doubt, from the judicious management of the British Captain. Yet, from this excellent good conduct it was, that detractors were

were inclined to lessen the merit of taking this ship with so much ease. They would not understand why the British Captain did not lie along-side the French ship, and give the enemy an opportunity of killing British seamen with French broadsides; and talked of giving fair play, as they would to two bruisers upon a fighting stage. I believe there is no instance when a private ship of war of such force was taken with so much ease, in any war before the last *.

Monf. Clonard was not the only officer who had reason to repent of his plan of boarding. The French undoubtedly, at this period, encouraged their officers to try the impetuosity of their courage in this way; representing to them, that the fire of their characters sword in hand would give

* The St. Florentine French private ship of war, of 60 guns, fought the Achilles of 60, for two hours the war before last, and did not surrender until her mainmast fell.

them

them an advantage over the cool-blooded courage of the English; which has always been fatal to their enemies in a long battle where deliberate skill was required. The enemy built some of their frigates wall-sided, that they might with more facility pass from one ship to another; and they held up as examples of fortune the exploits of Du Guay Trouin and Monsieur Fourbin, who had succeeded by boarding.

Those who are acquainted with the quick and impatient temper of the French nation, cannot be surpris'd that their officers (especially those who were young or in the prime of life) were pleas'd, that this mode of fighting was recommended to them; and many of them, no doubt, were panting with ardour to distinguish themselves. Among these, it seems, was the Chevalier du Romain, who commanded a fine frigate on the improved construction, called

called the *Nymphe*, of 36 guns and 300 men. This frigate, in as perfect a state of good condition as was possible, fell in with the *Flora*, of 36 guns, commanded by Captain Peere Williams, and 250 men, on her first cruize, but so badly manned, (her complement being composed of landsmen, or seamen who were not able-bodied) that the Lords of the Admiralty were made acquainted, before she sailed, of the miserable condition of her crew. Captain Williams *, however, bore down upon the enemy's ship so soon as he saw her; which brought-to, and waited the attack; and when the combatants were within pistol shot the action commenced. The *Flora*'s wheel being soon shot away, she became ungovernable, and fell on board the *Nymphe*; in which position the two ships continued their cannonade, firing with small

* This officer had a severe action also with a Dutch frigate in the *Flora*, which surrendered to him.

arms from the tops, and pushing through the ports with pikes. At length the enemy made a desperate attempt to board. The Second Captain, followed by other officers and a great number of men, advanced upon the gangway of the *Flora*, sword in hand; but were received with so much bravery, that the officers and most of their men were killed by pikes, or pushed overboard. Those who escaped into their ship were pursued, and driven off their own decks with great slaughter; the enemy's colours were struck, the ship taken possession of by the victors, and carried into port. The *Nymphe* afterwards proved one of the finest sailing ships in the British navy. Among the slain were the gallant Chevalier du Romain and most of his officers, with 60 men; whereas the *Flora* lost only eight.

At the commencement of the war, the British commanders had to apprehend

hend great naval talents and bravery in some of the French officers. Amongst the latter, the name of Monsieur La Motte Piquet was eminently placed. His first essay was on board the Saint Esprit of 84 guns, having the honour to command the ship which displayed the flag of the Duc de Chartres. But, as an officer can never be so well known in a subordinate as in a principal command, I will endeavour to find him under the latter description.

We see in the naval records of the last war, that the Honourable Captain William Cornwallis, commanding the Lion of 64 guns, having with him the Chatham of 50, and Janus of 44, fell in with a squadron of French ships commanded by Monsieur La Motte Piquet, consisting of the Hannibal and Diadem of 74 guns each, the Réfléchi of 64, and the Amphion of 50. The English squadron hav-

ing been scattered by baffling winds, one ship was in danger of being cut off, had not the Commodore bore down to succour her; and, uniting his force, he resisted the attack of the heavy ships of the enemy, and the skill of their celebrated Commodore; who, no doubt, had reckoned upon this small squadron as a breakfast to his fame. At length the Ruby of 64 guns, with the Pomona and Niger frigates, appearing in sight, the enemy was glad to desist, and was pursued by the little English squadron. I trust this circumstance is no proof of their superior naval talents. True it is, that the French Commodore was unfortunate in having this first essay of his abilities tried against an officer, who, with the most determined spirit, possesses a clear and sound judgement, and is always cool and collected in the midst of danger. It would be injustice, however, to deny that Monsieur La Motte Piquet has

has merit. His slipping his cables in Fort Royal Bay, to cover a convoy chased by the frigates of the British fleet, was a manœuvre requiring great resolution, and undoubtedly evinced great activity. But the talents for such exploits differ as widely from those which are required for well-fought battles, as patience and fortitude from petulance and wrath.

I shall next mention an action, the omission of which would have been an act of injustice both to the honour of the nation, and the reputation of Captain Reynolds (now Lord Ducie); who, commanding the Jupiter of 50 guns, in the commencement of the war, fell in with the Triton, a French 64 gun ship, off the coast of Portugal. The Jupiter had in company with her a frigate of 28 guns. Captain Reynolds did not hesitate a moment to attack a force so superior; and, after a severe action, unsupported by the frigate, which

had not been able to engage, obliged the enemy to sheer off.

There were many actions fought in the last war, by small ships, which evidently prove, that at no other period had British valour shone with greater lustre. Among these, the action of the Fly sloop of war, of 14 six pounders deserves eminent notice. She was commanded by Captain Garner; who, having under his convoy a packet, on board of which were the Duchess of Devonshire, her sister, and other persons of distinction, was chased, on his passage to England, by two French cutter sloops of war, of 20 guns each, French six pounders. The British Captain, inspired with the glory of protecting his beautiful charge, brought his ship to, determined to try his strength against so superior a force. At the same time he directed the Captain of the packet to make the best of his way to the nearest English port.

port. Soon after he was attacked by both cutters. But his officers, and every one of his seamen, inspired by the same gallantry which actuated their commander, fought like lions. The French cutters were beat off, in repeated attacks, with considerable loss; the packet arrived safe at Harwich, and his Majesty's sloop came with eclat into port. Captain Garner in consequence of this action was promoted to the rank of Post Captain, and His Grace the Duke of Devonshire presented him with a service of plate.

Captain Purvis, of His Majesty's sloop *Duc de Chartres* of 16 guns, on the coast of America fought a battle which deserves to be recorded; proving eminently the superior prowess of British sailors. After an action of an hour, he subdued the *Aigle* of 22 guns, belonging to the King of France. In this action, the Captain of the French ship with two officers and 12

men were killed, but the Duc de Chartres lost not a man.

On the distant stations, it has often happened that very meritorious actions of small ships have passed unnoticed. I shall take occasion to relate two, which ought not to be forgotten; and as they were fought by two young Captains, these proofs of their bravery may be accepted as indications of what their country have to expect from them when more experienced. Captain Byron, commanding His Majesty's ship *Proserpine* of 28 guns, was riding at anchor in the neutral port of St. Eustatius, with a French frigate (the *Sphynx*) of the same force. The rival commanders met on shore; and the French Captain, contemning the juvenile appearance of Captain Byron, intimated a sort of defiance. Both ships put to sea, and a battle ensued; but the British boy proved victorious, and carried the French veteran into St. Kitts.

On

On the Jamaica station, a similar action was fought by Captain Rowley, commanding the *Resource* of 28 guns, who was attacked by the *Unicorn* * of the same force. The French Captain, being previously informed of the youth of the English commander, bore down upon him with confidence. The action was sharp and obstinate. Both ships lost a number of men; but the French frigate was compelled to surrender.

We find, in the naval history of former wars, many pompous accounts of desperate battles, when British ships of 50 and 60 guns conquered ships of the enemy of 46 and 44 guns; which prove that the French fought at that time with greater obstinacy than they have done in the two last wars.

* Both the *Sphinx* and *Unicorn* had been captured from us, then carrying 20 guns each; but, as French frigates, mounted 28 guns.

In the last war, two ships of the enemy, on an improved construction, as completely equipped and as perfect as men of war of their force could be, were taken, the first time they put to sea, without making any resistance. The Artois of 44 guns, twenty-four, eighteen, and twelve pounders, was captured by the Romney of 50 guns, off the coast of Portugal, striking her colours as soon as the British ship came along-side. The Hebe, of the same force, was taken in a similar manner, without an attempt to try her strength, by the Rainbow of 44 guns, commanded by Captain Trollope.

As my object is principally to demonstrate the erroneous assertion, that the French have made a more respectable figure as a maritime power during the last war, than they ever did before, I have not particularly noticed our actions with the Dutch, Spaniards, and American rebels.

bels. The action of the Dogger Bank proves that the Dutch have not degenerated in their courage. The Spaniards, when they have been met, have not given us reason to regard them as a formidable maritime power. One of their frigates, the *Santa Ammonica* of 32 guns, behaved gallantly, engaging the *Pearl* frigate, commanded by Captain George Montague*, for a considerable time before she surrendered; but the *Santa Catalina*, a large Spanish frigate of 36 guns, was taken by the *Succes* of 32 guns, commanded by Captain Pole, having an armed ship in company with him, without any loss or damage to his ship.

Of the instances where the French commanders have done their duty in the last war, the conduct of the Captain of the

* This officer, commanding the same frigate, after a gallant action also captured a French ship of equal force, called the *Esperance*, on the coast of America.

Scipion of 74 guns, when attacked by the London, a three-decked ship of 90 guns, should not be forgotten. This ship in company with a frigate was chased off the West end of Hispaniola by the London, Captain Kempthorne, and Torbay of 74 guns, Captain Gidoin, and was brought to action by the London. The Torbay, being a bad sailer, was left behind in the chase. The French commander was not intimidated by the superior force which threatened him, but gallantly defended himself; and by endeavouring to push athwart the hawse of the London fell on board of her, and in that position maintained the fight. The London in the conflict lost her fore yard; and at the same time the enemy's ship falling astern raked her, and shot away her tiller; so that she became totally ungovernable, and was greatly annoyed, until she could bring her broadside again to bear; when she silenced the

the enemy's ship, and it was supposed she had struck *, as the frigate made sail from her. The Torbay, who had now come up, was told the enemy had struck: but the French Captain finding that neither of the English ships approached to take possession, hoisted his topsails, which had been shot down, and made sail. The London not having the use of her headsails, and having lost her tiller, could not wear to follow her; and the Torbay was too bad a sailer to come up with her before she ran ashore upon the rocks, where she was lost. There certainly cannot be too much commendation given to this gallant French officer, for his perseverance. At the same time it must be admitted by every seaman, that bad accidents frequently occur in battle, which no skill or courage can immediately remedy. No

* The action happened at night.

accident,

accident, for example, could have been more unfortunate, than that which happened to the London.

Of the unfortunate events at sea during the last war, the most material was the capture of the outward bound East and West India fleets under the convoy of the Ramillies, Captain Moutray, and two frigates; and this was the more unlucky, as it happened from real carelessness. Had the frigates been stationed a-head to look out, which is a very general precaution in such cases, the combined fleets would have been distinctly discovered before night. As it was, a number of large ships were seen from the mast-head; yet our fleet kept on its course, and in the morning was in the middle of the enemy. This circumstance is the more extraordinary, as Captain Moutray was known to be a brave, able, and experienced officer. Therefore, when we reflect upon it, we
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can only suppose that the best men are sometimes under inexplicable influence, which thwarts and destroys the force of their judgement. A very similar circumstance happened to one of the best and greatest Admirals that England ever produced, Sir George Rook; who, though he cannot be accused of carelessness, suffered himself to be deceived by false intelligence, and ran a fleet of merchant men of four hundred sail, called the Smyrna convoy, into the midst of the French fleet, when most of them were taken*.

Amongst other untoward events was the capture of the Ardent † of 64 guns, commanded by Captain Boteler; who, mistaking the combined fleets of France and Spain for an English fleet, ran into the heart of it, and was taken; and the cap-

* See Campbell's Admirals.

† This ship was retaken the 12th of April.

ture of the Minerva frigate of 32 *, by the Concorde French frigate of 36 guns. Captain Stott commanded the Minerva; and, being ignorant of the rupture which had broken out between France and Great Britain, was surpris'd on the Jamaica station by the French frigate. However blameable he might be, even in time of peace, not to have his ship ready for battle, it is well known that many ships have often been in the same unprepared condition. Certain it is, that the Minerva was in a state of defenceless security. She had not powder filled for an action, and her powder-horns were empty. The ship was not barricaded, and the people were in crouds upon the gangway, when the French frigate poured in a broadside upon her. In such a condition, I will not venture to assert, that a line of battle ship

* Retaken by the Courageux,

might not have been taken. It was so novel a thing for the French to take a British man of war, *in the two last wars*, that it is not to be wondered at, they should make the most of these two last mentioned captures. But it will, I think, be admitted, that they had no more cause to be elated, than the Indian who had caught a lion in a trap, or transfixed him with his dart when asleep.

I now proceed to an enterprize, which of itself is sufficient to sink the naval character of our great rival into eternal disgrace, whilst it raises the maritime fame of Great Britain to the summit of glory. I mean the relief of Gibraltar. It is well known, that the grand object of Spain was the reduction of this important fortress. Every contrivance by land and sea; the whole art of war was exhibited; large ships were converted into floating batteries, impenetrable to shot and shells,

in order to subdue the brave garrison. France co-operated both by land and sea, and became so sanguine in her expectations, that her princes of the blood were sent to share the glory of the conquest. Their hopes were principally cherished, from the confidence they had in their floating batteries. These, however, were blasted in one day, set fire to, and burnt with red-hot shot from the garrison. But, notwithstanding the garrison had proved itself invincible against all the contrivances of engineers, it was still in danger from its exhausted state, and by being blocked up by a fleet of 44 sail of the line, when it was known that Great Britain could not assemble above 34 sail. It would have been regarded, perhaps, as madness and presumption in any other nation, under such circumstances, to have attempted its relief. Yet, there remained a confident spirit in the British Government at this period, that
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that declared openly its intention of relieving Gibraltar; with 34 sail to force a passage through the combined fleets of France and Spain (as it was natural to suppose the enemy would have formed a barrier before the entrance of the Straits), to succour the garrison; and accordingly Lord Howe was dispatched on this service.

The fate of Gibraltar now depended on a battle at sea. All that had been attempted from the skill, bravery and perseverance of immense armies, at an enormous expence, was at stake, to be determined perhaps in a few hours. With such mighty superiority, with a certainty of conquest and glory if the British fleet should be beaten, let us see what the combined fleets of Their Most Christian and Catholic Majesties performed. Nothing! The simple relation of the fact is sufficient; the British Admiral, undaunted by their superior numbers, conducted his fleet to

Gibraltar, and relieved the garrison, in the face of the enemy, with as little annoyance as if their ships had been row gallees.

It is true, they afterwards followed the British fleet through the Straits of Gibraltar, and fired a few random shot, which had the appearance of anger, but without further meaning.

I come now to the relation of an action, which, though of smaller magnitude, and amongst the last during the war, I am sure the reader will not be least enamoured of, and which alone is sufficient to prove that there existed in the British Navy a spirit as daring as any it ever exhibited. At the same time it will demonstrate, that at no period whatever has our enemy been more panic-struck by British valour. I mean the action of the Mediator of 44 guns, commanded by the Hon. James Luttrell, with a fleet of French armed ships, completely equipped and well manned,

ned, carrying together upwards of 100 guns; one of them very large, had all the appearance of a 64 gun ship, having two tiers of ports. This little Squadron, upon the approach of the Mediator, drew up in a line; and the British Captain instantly determined to attack. His judgment persuaded him the enemy's ships were not men of war, by putting themselves in a posture of defence. His ship was a fast sailer; and, with the mind of a hero, he was tempted to try their strength. The boldness and impetuosity of the attack, at once confounded and threw the enemy into confusion. Their line broke, and each ship fled with all the sail she could crowd. One of their smallest ships struck first, afterwards the Commodore was compelled to surrender; and it should not be forgotten, that the Mediator on this occasion lost only one man. If the spirit of envy, which has endeavoured to

diminish the merits of every action in the last war, should remark, that these were a fleet only of armed ships; let it be remembered, that the most obstinate battle fought in the former war, was by a ship of this description*, which was subdued only by a persevering and determined bravery in the British Captain, that had been seldom equalled, never surpassed.

Persuaded, that France has at no period given such slender proofs of ability to cope with us, as in the last war, and that her sailors (whether employed in their ships of war, or in their armed ships) have never been so easily vanquished, I shall mention an instance of intrepidity and enterprise, exhibited in the conduct of the commander of a British private ship of war, something similar to the achievement of Captain Luttrell.—Captain Moore, com-

* See Campbell's Admirals, Vol. IV. p. 186—the action of the Minerva with the Warwick.

manding

manding the *Fame* privateer (of 22 guns, six pounders, and 120 men), cruising in the Mediterranean, on the 18th of November, 1781, fell in with five sail of armed merchant ships. Two of them carried 18 guns, nine pounders; the other three mounted 16 and 12 guns each, and all were well manned.—Captain Moore, undismayed by their numbers, attacked them without hesitation; and, by his address and bravery, after an obstinate contest, defeated them, and captured the two largest, the *Marianne Olympe* from *Mar-seilles*, and the *Activité*, both bound to the *West Indies*.

Having thus as briefly as possible remarked upon the most material actions of the last war (though there are many others which happened on distant stations, and in small ships, that are worthy of being recorded), I shall be amply satisfied, if, by faithfully relating what has come to my knowledge,

knowledge, or passed under my notice, and comparing the actions of the last war, and the circumstances attending them, with the battles we have fought with France upon the seas in former wars, as they are related by our historians, I have furnished materials, not only to correct the mistaken opinion, that the British naval character is degenerated, but to prove that the last war at sea was the most glorious of any that Great Britain was ever engaged in. True, it has been called unfortunate; and nothing undoubtedly can be more calamitous, than for a nation to have the whole world leagued against her. But if the history of the last war should be ever read, at as great a distance of time as we are now from the periods when Rome was in the zenith of her glory, I will venture to foretel, that the warlike genius of Great Britain will be regarded with an infinitely greater degree of admiration and astonishment.

ment. If we consult the map of the world, and behold the insignificant appearance of Great Britain, compared to the immense tracts and regions of the earth with whose inhabitants she contended, it seems indeed a species of presumption to say we were unfortunate. At this instant we not only exist as an independent kingdom, but are beyond example, by the wisdom of a virtuous minister, flourishing in our commerce, respected in our politics, and dreaded at sea.

In the last war, considering the effects of the Armed Neutrality, we may assert, that all Europe was against us, with the whole civilised continent of America. In the East Indies we were contending with, defending, or holding tributary, the princes of a mighty empire, the history of whose former exploits we have read with admiration. Notwithstanding this, fashionable politicians have proclaimed to the world,

that the nation is at the mercy of our enemies, from the degenerated state of our navy!

If it be true that the navy is in such a deplorable state, from what cause has it been able to contend with, and conquer, the great maritime powers of Europe united, without losing a single line of battle ship? We find, in the naval history of England, at *these glorious periods* which are held up as examples to our modern naval heroes, when the naval discipline *shone with such resplendent lustre*, it often happened, that we were not able to cope with any *one* of the great maritime powers; that sometimes, in alliance with Holland, we were worsted; and had our ships taken and destroyed by France alone; that we have sometimes asked assistance from France to fight the fleets of Holland; that the latter alone disputed with us the sovereignty of the seas, followed our men
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of war into their harbours, and burnt our ships in the river Thames and Medway.—

But in the last war, we not only contended with France, Spain, and Holland, aided and abetted by the Armed Neutrality, but were engaged in a civil war with our colonies, which not only deprived us of a number of our seamen, but diverted them to fight against us. Add to this, a divided cabinet and people at home. When all these circumstances are considered, it becomes a case of common sense to believe, that the gloomy apprehensions so industriously propagated respecting the glory of Great Britain, proceed either from ignorance or faction. Great Britain will never, it is to be presumed, have so many enemies or so many difficulties to encounter, as she experienced in the last war. Then, indeed, it appeared as if the elements had joined our foes; for storms and hurricanes assisted

assisted them to destroy a navy, which by their own strength alone they were unable to shake. All, however, proved to be vain. For Great Britain as a maritime power has proved invincible. Instead, therefore, of desponding, every Briton's heart should swell with pride, and confidently hope, that so long as Great Britain is true to herself, she has nothing to dread from ambitious rivals. As a warlike nation, high as she stands in the opinion of *foreign powers*, perhaps she has not yet reached the zenith of her glory. But every thing depends upon the attention that is paid to the discipline and improvement of the naval service. It matters not what are our mechanical improvements, or what are the superior qualities of our officers and seamen, if they are not united, or act not together. Unanimity, which should animate the whole corps, and which is capable of performing such wonders, will,
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if neglected, degenerate into party spirit and jealousy; to the extinction of that zeal for the honour of our country, which is invariably to be found, if uncontaminated with art or intrigue, in the hearts of our seamen.

Of the discipline of our navy during the last war, though it was materially hurt by party disputes; yet, as far as respected the good order and improved regulations of individual ships, there was an attention to it, that had never before been seen; our ears have been dinned with the ancient discipline of the navy; but where is this ancient discipline to be found? or what are we to understand by it, to make it differ from the modern discipline? I understand by the word discipline, a strict obedience to, and execution of, the laws, and instructions which have been framed for the better conducting, sailing, and fighting the fleet. These laws and instructions remain
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the same now as formerly, with some additional instructions; the affected distinction therefore betwixt ancient and modern discipline is a term without meaning. If it is to be understood, that the different methods of carrying the discipline into practice have given rise to the complaint, I am convinced, that what is called ancient discipline has nothing to boast of; for if we compare the past practices and methods, as they have been explained to us thirty years ago by the old seamen in the service, with the present, we shall find, that in no one thing under the British Government has there been so much improvement as in the art of fighting, sailing, and navigating a British ship of war. The old method of enforcing discipline, was without method, by main strength, and the frequent use of the rattan; without which, no officer, from the Captain down to the youngest Midshipman, ever went upon deck.

deck. Even twenty years ago there was much of this sort of discipline (if it can be called by that name) remaining in the service.

Last war, there is no doubt that the internal discipline of His Majesty's ships was in general brought to as great a degree of perfection, almost, as it is capable of receiving; I say, in general. There were indeed exceptions; but in Captains bigotted to old customs, and whose ships might always be distinguished by their awkwardness and inactivity, and the indifferent figure they cut in action, though commanded with bravery. This general improvement proceeded from a method adopted in every branch of an officer's and sailor's duty, by dividing and quartering the officers with the men, and making them responsible for the performance of that portion of duty allotted them, without noise, or the brutal method

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of driving the sailors like cattle, with sticks. Whether it were to make or shorten sail, to manœuvre the ship, to keep the men clean clothed, clean bedded and birthed, this method was practised. And besides other advantages, we found so materially our account in the article of health, that in the West Indies, where formerly our ships suffered severely from disease, in the last war there was an instance when in 22 sail of the line, there were not 22 men who could not come to their quarters. It was from these improvements in the discipline of the service, that our ships were so much more formidable than they had ever been before. By a just proportion of labour falling to the lot of each man, instead of the management of it being entrusted to the partiality of boatswains' mates, the men were kept in better temper; and were less harrassed and fatigued in their spirits, as well as in their bodies. There was also a careful attention

tion to the sick and convalescent, that had never before been known in the service. Sour crout, the essence of malt, and mellasses, greatly contributed to keep the men in health: and latterly, instead of rancid butter and rotten cheese, the men were served with cocoa and sugar *.

So much has been said upon this subject of the dissatisfaction of our seamen with the King's service, that I believe many of them have been persuaded by idle clamours to become dissatisfied, who never had any just reason to be so. It has been asserted, that justice has not been done to them in their wages and prize money. That they have been deceived in their expectations of prize money,

* The seamen in the West Indies were obliged to Sir Samuel Hood for this salutary change in their diet; he obtained the sanction of the Admiralty, that they should be served with as much cocoa and sugar as could be purchased for the price of their allowance of butter and cheese; and which was indeed more than sufficient.

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there is no doubt; and that the riches which had been promised to them in their Sovereign's proclamation, as a reward for their toils, their exertions, and their bravery, has been shared in the Courts of Law. But if they have experienced any difficulty in obtaining their wages, I am inclined to believe that it did not proceed from neglect, or inattention of the Admiralty, or any office or officers. The service last war frequently required, that men should be turned over from one ship to another. This was unavoidable; and it was a hardship, that the seamen often failed before the forms of office could be gone through, to enable them to receive their wages. This proceeded from the necessity of sending our ships to sea, and private convenience yielded to public good. Surrounded by enemies, all the seamen we could muster were scarcely equal to the nation's defence. These no sooner returned from an
attack

attack in one ship, then they were put on board another ready for sea, and were deprived of that repose and recreation which they had experienced in former wars. This hardship was indeed to be lamented; for such are the fatigues of the sea service, that it would prove absolutely intolerable, if there were not periods of relaxation and repose. The British sailor should sometimes enjoy the society of his mistress, and be permitted to drink his skin full of liquor, and there is no service afterwards that he will not cheerfully undertake. But, if he is never to hope for indulgence, you may compel him to tug at the oar like a galley slave, but you will destroy the energy of his health and spirits. Let it be remembered, that in all former wars, ships were frequently docked, the seamen were in port for a month or six weeks at a time; and, having spent their wages or prize money, grew impatient to return in quest of the enemy. In the last war, when it

was the practice to copper ships, they were scarcely ever in port, and the crews had not those indulgencies which are absolutely necessary to gratify and inspirit them. This hardship, it cannot be denied, was discouraging and tiresome to many; but in other respects, from the good treatment, the care taken of them, the mode and practice of carrying on duty, the seamen on board His Majesty's ships had never so much cause to be satisfied.

Much has been said of the mutiny which prevailed in the Channel fleet, upon ordering the ships to be paid off at the different ports at the end of the war, the seamen insisting, at the instigation of their landlords, to be paid off at the ports of Portsmouth and Plymouth, where their ships then were. But I cannot conceive that there is any occasion to consider this event with much seriousness. Seamen will always become their own masters whenever they are permitted: and that they

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were permitted, virtually, there is no doubt; for the first proper attempt made to bring them back to their duty, succeeded. Seeing their Captain * determined to recover the discipline of the ship, they yielded without an effort. This proves, that they had no disgust at the service, or resentment to their officers, as has been falsely supposed. Had this been the case, the most dreadful consequences would have ensued: but there was not an officer in any of the ships where the mutiny most prevailed that was treated with disrespect. Merely stimulated by their landlords, they endeavoured to carry their point; more to gratify the wishes of these their mischievous creditors, than to answer any bad purpose of their own hearts. But to proceed with my remarks on the improvements in his Majesty's navy during the last war.

In naval evolutions, in the art of com-

* Lord Hervey, Captain of the *Raisonné*.

bining the force of ships of war, of changing positions, so as to put a fleet in the best shape for attack or defence; of sailing a large fleet by divisions, without danger to the ships of running on board each other in their various manœuvres, and by which means a line of battle might be formed with the greater facility; the last was the only war in which we had ever any real knowledge. Yet very good old officers have reprobated the art of manœuvring a fleet. "Damn your manœuvres!" cried out they, "give me every man his bird." But it is clear to common sense in seamanship, that every man cannot have his bird, unless the Admiral who commands, has equal skill with the Admiral of the enemy's fleet to which he happens to be opposed. Admitting that our deliberate courage gives us an advantage over the French nation in battle at sea, and that we are better seamen; still, if we are not skilful in the

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art of forming our fleets, those qualities which Nature seems to have given us for the defence of our island; will prove useless. We have failed more than once by confiding merely in our bravery, and permitting our ships to attack at random. This happened on the 27th of July, and in the battle off the Grenades in the West Indies; and I may add, Admiral Arbuthnot's battle off the Capes of Virginia. If the latter was not at random, it will be admitted, that if there had been as much skill in the management of the whole fleet, as there was bravery shewn in those ships that engaged, the French squadron would have been captured.

The nation is indebted to the late Admiral Kempelfelt, from whose genius and labour the art of manœuvring a great fleet was put in practice, and brought to a degree of perfection never known before. Signals were also methodised, and were at

once rendered distinct, comprehensive, and intelligent.

Lord Howe and Lord Hood have been as much indebted to their skill in the management of the fleets they have commanded, for the glory they have acquired, as to their intrepidity. With this knowledge, they have often braved, and foiled, a superior force; profiting with dexterity of every occasion that offered to distress the enemy.

Amidst very great improvements in the British navy, which indeed had conduced much to our success, it still was weakened by disadvantages and imperfections in its establishment. Amongst the latter, I cannot help noticing the manner in which the Marine Corps are attached to the service, or perhaps with more propriety, I might say, detached from it.

Marines as they are situated will ever remain dissatisfied with the naval service, and, being so, will break in upon that harmony

harmony which is so essential to good order and discipline, unless some alteration be made in their establishment, to render them of more use when embarked. Sensible of their little consequence at sea, and that they are regarded merely as idlers, their pride as men is often wounded; they of course become captious, and susceptible to the slightest inattention. It is not the men that are to blame, it is the service; for the case would be the same, if the Navy Officers were Marines, and the Marines Navy Officers. As it is, there are constant heart-burnings. If you dine at the Ward-room table of a man of war, you hear the Marine Corps described as useless passengers; and if you dine with the Marine Corps at their Barracks, you will be entertained with a description of the Officers of the Navy, not calculated to exalt them in the opinion of the world. All this is the effect of certain causes. It

is human nature, which is seldom patient when disregarded.

In the corps of Marines there are perhaps as many worthy, amiable men, as many men who are ambitious, and who pant after honourable fame *, as in any other corps. How mortifying must it be for such characters, to see themselves considered as mere cyphers ! It matters not how gallant a Captain of Marines may be in battle ; his name is not known. He stands upon the poop to be shot at ; but cannot receive that fame which his feelings tell him he would acquire, were he placed in a responsible situation, or could he look up to such a one.

Is there no way to remedy this defect ? Is there no method to be devised, whereby the corps of Marines might in future

* Whenever the Marines have served as troops on shore, they have proved themselves, by their bravery and their discipline, as ambitious to distinguish themselves as the most renowned regiments.

be incorporated with the Navy? I should think this purpose would be in some respect answered, if they could become useful in the art of sailing and navigating His Majesty's ships. The outline of my plan is, that when a Midshipman had served his time, he should be permitted (if he had not interest to obtain a commission as a Lieutenant in the Navy) to serve as a Lieutenant of Marines, and to return to the Navy whenever, from his merit or interest, he is able to obtain a commission: his duty should be, to assist the Lieutenant of the watch as a seaman. In the same way, when Lieutenant of a ship, if he has not immediate interest to obtain a command, he may be appointed Captain of Marines; and his duty should be, when all hands are upon deck, to assist in the business of the ship. He should also be promoted to the command of one of His Majesty's ships, whenever from his merit or his interest he becomes

becomes entitled. But so long as he remains Captain of Marines, it would be necessary that the command of the ship should devolve on him after the junior Lieutenant; and the Marine uniform should be blue.

If some plan of this kind, properly digested, were adopted, the purpose would not only be answered, but in a few years it would be a great accession of strength, inasmuch as it would add as many Officers seamen to the service as there are Marine Officers. And they would no longer be accused of being idlers, of fomenting disputes, of creating division in His Majesty's ships, or of disturbing the Lieutenants who have the watch of the deck, with the rattling of backgammon, or the scraping upon the violin. Their employment and fatigues being the same, they would sleep at the same hours; and the service would be much strengthened by such unity.

Amongst the disadvantages under which the naval service laboured in the last war, one (and by no means the least) was, having a number of young and inexperienced officers. In the West Indies, where so many battles were fought, in ten sail of the line there have not been ten Lieutenants who had served out their time. This, however, did not happen from any preference given to high birth or interest; but there were not Midshipmen to be found who had served their whole time. This misfortune, for a real misfortune it certainly was, arose from a neglect in this branch of the service during the peace, the most ill-judged œconomy that ever was thought of. Instead of retaining in guardships the complement of Midshipmen, upwards of an hundred, most of them experienced and able seamen, were discharged at one time. Many obtained commissions in the Marines; and others

others disgusted with the service, quitted it for ever. The want of experienced Lieutenants and Midshipmen was so severely felt, in the last war, by many Admirals and Captains who are now in power, or have influence, that no doubt the wisest methods will be adopted to encourage, and attach to the service, a sufficient number who may have knowledge enough to be entrusted with the charge of a line of battle ship, in their watch, after they become Lieutenants. When we consider the importance of this object, we cannot too much reprobate that measure, which has driven from the naval service officers of this description*.

I humbly presume, that not only the guardships should bear their full complement, but whenever any young men are

* An alteration, it is said, has taken place to enlarge the complement of Midshipmen since this pamphlet was first printed.

out of employ, they should be received on board until they can find employment.

The cruising ships, and those which are stationed abroad, should bear an additional number ; and to those who serve in merchant ships suitable gratifications should be held out, in order to bring them back to the service when there might be occasion for them. Perhaps too much encouragement could not be given to young gentlemen who are destined for the navy, to serve a part of their time in the merchant service. They thereby not only become good seamen*, but they are so often

* There is a sort of doctrine which I trust will never gain credit in the service, and which cannot be too much reprobated. That it is possible to be a good Officer, without being a good Seaman. I believe it to be generally favoured by those Officers who come too late into the service to be initiated into a Seaman's duty. Wishing at once to become Officers, they were perhaps placed to command, instead of being placed in the tops to be taught a Sailor's duty.

often exposed to difficulty and danger, and so enured to hardship, that their hearts become

To say, that it is possible for a man to be a good Officer without being a Seaman, is an assertion that no man who calls himself an Officer can maintain, and which every Seaman will call absurd. It may, with equal truth, be said, That an Officer may at once be a good Farmer; when to his cost he would soon find, that being ignorant in the mystery and labour of husbandry, he would be deceived by every person he employed; as that Officer will most assuredly be, and with a risque to his reputation, who has not the knowledge of a Seaman, and who is obliged to trust to his Boatswain, should his ship be disasted either in bad weather or in battle. It is well known, that when there has been an exertion from the Captain's own knowledge as a Seaman, lower masts have been got in and rigged, topmasts have been got up after being carried away, in a fourth-part of the time that the same duty has been performed when entrusted to officers whose abilities, whether good or bad, the Captain has not been a judge of. There is a confidence also which the men have in their Commander, when they find he is a Seaman: the duty is carried on with a steady cheerfulness, because they know that he is a competent judge of all that can be expected in the performance of their duty. How often has it happened, that a set of top-men have been flogged round, because the topgallant yard has not been got across so soon

become steeled to the hazards of war. It may indeed be a difficult matter to persuade young men, that, to become eminent in their profession, it is absolutely necessary they should almost incessantly labour to acquire knowledge; and that it is from being exposed to danger, and conquering difficulties, which vary every voyage, that he can acquire experience. But the illustrious example of the Duke of Clarence, surpasses every thing that can be said on this subject. Sensible that he could become master of his profession, and equal to the command for which he is destined, only by unwearied application, His Royal

soon as another ship's! though there has been the utmost alacrity shewn by these people, and perhaps from their over eagerness the mistake has happened. But the Captain being a lubber himself, and having never rigged a yard arm, calls his zealous Sailors lubbers (who have as much pride for the ship he commands as himself), and flogs them at a venture for not doing what he is not a judge of, and which often does not depend upon their best exertions.

Highness

Highness is indefatigable in attention to his duty. Disdaining the indulgence natural to his birth, he has always shared the risques, the watchings and toils of a seaman. In the most inclement seasons, in dark and stormy nights, he has gone aloft to hand or to reef the topails. He was reputed the best Midshipman in the ship in which he served. And when a Lieutenant, his Captain declared, cruising in a dangerous navigation in the Channel of England in the winter season, that he was relieved from all anxiety when His Royal Highness had the watch upon deck. Placed in the responsibility of command on a distant station, we see him in the same steady pursuit. With every pleasure to allure him, the only object that could captivate or fix His Royal Highness with any degree of constancy, was the frigate he commanded. Should the Duke of Clarence still engage our admiration,

ration, by persevering in his duty, the service may experience the happiest effects in having so exalted and so exemplary a pattern. It may, with great truth, be affirmed, that His Royal Highness is not only the first Prince of the Blood who has been regularly bred to the sea, but that scarcely any young man of high birth has been so strictly brought up, or has acquired so much real knowledge in the profession. From such well-grounded qualifications, with the inherent personal bravery of his august family, may not the nation expect, when His Royal Highness shall animate the British fleet with his flag as Commander in Chief, that his known judgement as a Seaman and an Officer will inspire every heart with confidence?

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It will appear, I trust, from this short review of the naval transactions of the last

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war,

war, that the notion, which too generally prevailed, of the French having given greater instances of maritime skill and bravery, than they had ever done in any former war, is entirely without foundation.

If the exhausted state of our finances would not permit us to continue the war when the British flag began to be triumphant, it was a misfortune which cannot be too much lamented. For it may be presumed, that our fleets, re-animated by the victory of the 12th of April, whilst the enemy had become cautious and dispirited, would soon have produced a series of success, to have reduced France to a situation similar to what she experienced at the conclusion of the war 1756.

In the report I have made of those Officers who have distinguished themselves in the service of their country; I have written, to the best of my judgement, with-

out prejudice or partiality, being actuated by no other motive than that of rendering justice to merit. This, indeed, may be a bold undertaking in times like the present, when truth is made a jest of, when the principles of honour are sacrificed to answer the purposes of party, and unprincipled men exult in the mischief.

As my name is unknown to every person mentioned in this little work, I trust I shall not be suspected of adulation; and I shall bear, without repining, the animadversions of those gentlemen, who have not a relish for any thing that comes not fabricated from the mint of calumny.

T H E E N D .



